CANADIAN THESIS
THESES CANADIENNES

PIDLUZNY, Jonathan William
A TRUE PHILOSOPHER'S INDICTMENT OF (AND APOLOGY FOR) THE ...

ISBN 0-612-95651-2
MQ-95651

University of Alberta

A True Philosopher's Indictment of (and Apology for) the Sciences and the Arts

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Master of Arts*

Department of *Political Science*

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 2004

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ISBN: 0-612-95651-2

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Nations of our day cannot have it that conditions within them are not equal; but it depends on them whether equality leads them to servitude or freedom, to enlightenment or barbarism, to prosperity or misery.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

To My Parents

Acknowledgement

The four months it has taken to complete this work have reminded me how truly fortunate I am to have arrived at this point. Like my education to date, this is a project which could never have been completed were it not for the incredibly generous support of friends, family, and teachers who have so kindly tolerated my oftentimes selfish devotion to this project and to my studies in general.

It would be impossible to be more understanding that my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and brothers have been. From providing transportation for papers and chapters at the very last minute, to doing my dishes once they'd become a Herculean task, from shopping for me, to leaving (large) pots of homemade chicken noodle soup in my fridge on those nights I worked late at school and would have otherwise "forgotten" to eat, from offering their unending encouragement, and to kidnapping me from my office to enforce a much needed break, my family has provided me every kind of support. I have been fortunate to call my Gramma's home my own for four of the last five years: she has made life's daily chores much easier than they ought to have been, "home-cooking" has taken on new meaning, and her beautiful garden has invigorated many gloomy mornings. My aunt Allison and uncle Bret have been instrumental in my life's education. I can thank them for turning me toward the course of study I have grown so fond of, to say nothing of the countless flights, and other major helps they have provided these last few years. Most of all, I would like to thank my parents for a moral education even Rousseau would have been impressed by. My mom and dad taught me what to love, what to fear, what to be proud of, and when to be ashamed. Their lessons have been, and will be, with me every day of my life.

Near the end of this year, I was informed that conversation seemed to gravitate toward my "thesis" whenever I went out with friends. It would be impossible to express my gratitude to this group of men and women from whom I have learned more than I could express here, a group which, to my great fortune, is made up of so many people it would be impossible to thank them all properly. Natalie Elliot, in particular, has taught me more about myself (and a side of life I too often ignore) than I would have thought possible five years ago; she has reminded me (time and time again) that life can be lived in vibrant color. I think I can say we have talked about almost everything, and through it all, her friendship has been unwavering, and in that, truly unique. Conversations with Greg Tychon, Murray Besset, Joel McCrum, and Mark Verbitsky have helped me immeasurably to think realistically and *politically*; my analysis of political life will always be the richer for it. Finally, Heather Schultz brightened countless mornings (and afternoons) spend reading and writing at the SugarBowl; witty and clear-sighted at once, many of her insights have found their way into these pages in one form or another.

To my teachers, I am eternally grateful. Their efforts have been tireless: the meticulously crafted lectures, their inspiring examples, the time they have dedication to this project and my education—none of it will be forgotten. The education I have received from Professor Craig and Professor Studer is of a sort that will never end. For they have taught me more, much more than Plato and Xenophon, Rousseau and Bacon; they have taught me how to read the greatest books our libraries have to offer, and thus, they have helped me to access the greatest and most beautiful treatises on education—including one's personal education—that our world has to offer. My life will no doubt be the richer for it, more than I will ever know.

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Abbreviations

Rousseau:

FD	*First Discourse* (Roger Masters)
DSA	*Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (Gallimard)
SD	*Second Discourse* (Masters)
SC	*Social Contract* (Victor Gourevitch)
Obs	*Observations* (Gourevitch)
LR	*Last Reply* (Gourevitch)
CNFS	*Confessions* (Oeuvres Complètes and Oxford)
RSW	*Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (Christopher Kelly/ Roger Masters)
CGP	*Considerations on the Government of Poland and its Projected Reformation* (Gourevitch)
EOL	*Essay on the Origin of Languages* (Gourevitch)
PE	*Discourse on Political Economy* (Gourevitch)
LV	*Letter to Voltaire* (Gourevitch)
LB	*Letter to Beaumont* (Gourevitch)
PN	*Preface to Narcissus* (Gourevitch)
LNR	*Letter about a new Refutation* (Gourevitch)
LM	*Letter to Malesherbes*
PSLB	*Preface to the Second Letter to Bordes* (Gourevitch)
LMn	*Letters from the Mountain* (Masters/ Kelly)
Grimm	*Letter to Grimm* (Gourevitch)
Emile	*Emile* (Allan Bloom)
Julie	*Julie* (Phillip Stewart and Jean Vaché)
Ld'A	*Letter to d'Alembert* (Bloom)
OC	*Oèuvre Complètes* (Gallimard)

Montesquieu:

PL	*Persian Letters* (C. J. Betts)
CRGD	*Considerations on the Cause of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* (David Lowentahl)

Tocqueville:

DA	*Democracy in America* (Mansfield)

Hobbes:

Lev	*Leviathan* (Cambridge)

Plato:

Rep	*Republic* (Allan Bloom)
Apology	*Apology* (Thomas G. West)

Montaigne:

Of Pedantry	(Complete Works, Donald M. Frame)
Of Inequality	
Of Discussion	

Nietzsche:

BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil* (Walter Kaufman)

Descartes:

DM	*Discourse on Method* (Donald A. Cress)

Strauss:

NRH	*Natural Right and History* (Seventh Edition)
IR	*On the Intention of Rousseau*

Historians:

Livy	*The History of Rome* (Volumes I-V; Everyman's Library)
Tacitus	*Annals* (Ramsay)
Josephus	*Complete Works* (William Nimmo)

Literature:

Stendhal	*The Red and The Black* (Everyman's Library)

Secondary:

Havens	*Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (Édition Critique)
Masters	*The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*

Introduction

To assert that Rousseau was deeply troubled by the modern morality—or more precisely, by modern man's lack of any force capable of opposing the unbridled reign of his basest, most individualistic and selfish passions—would almost surely be to understate the problem which underlies much of what Rousseau wrote. Indeed, he is remembered primarily for his trenchant indictment of modern man and the modern polity. In fact, his vehement attack on the sciences and the arts that are so central to modernity—what initially made Rousseau famous, or (as one prefers) infamous—would not cease with his first important work, the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*. But for all his venomous words and damning criticisms, Rousseau himself is unmistakably both philosophic and poetic. Many of his works begin with a rhetorical flourish, as arresting as it is beautiful, and at the same time pregnant with insight. The *Social Contract*'s first line, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains", is among the most memorable of many memorable lines. *Emile*, perhaps Rousseau's most famous book, begins with a striking indictment in a similar spirit: "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man." And thus, so very provocatively, Rousseau states a theme that preoccupies him from the beginning until the end of his literary career.

If the first line of the "earliest of [Rousseau's] important writings" is not so strikingly beautiful, then, this is not to say it is neither arresting nor revealing. The *First Discourse* begins with a declaration the philosopher would never retract: "Here is one of the greatest [grandes] and noblest [belles] questions ever debated" (FD: δ1). Articulated as a response to a question posed in October 1749 by the Academy of Dijon, "Whether the reestablishment of the Sciences and the Arts has contributed to purifying *mores*", his position here turns out to be similar to the arguments the philosopher will continue to espouse in his later writings. Even though (or perhaps precisely because) Rousseau would change the question to suit his thesis— adding "or to corrupting [mores]" after what had actually been posed—he would always maintain that the issue at hand "is a matter of one of those truths that concern the happiness of mankind" (FD: δ4, δ1).

Rousseau's understanding of what nature prescribes for man energizes his critique of modern ways, manners, and opinions. In the name of man's highest excellences—the

monumental tasks history proves mankind capable of accomplishing, essentially, what men can become: virtuous and free, according to Rousseau—he aims at restoring the ground of man's genuine happiness, and with it, the dignity of humankind. He begins by attacking an emerging modernity, and his assault is relentless. What men, women, their communities, and their polities (now larger and more complex than ever before) were becoming—perhaps even what they had already become—deeply disturbed Rousseau, a self-declared "friend of humanity". He identifies Thomas Hobbes' influence on European politics as, perhaps, the single most pernicious factor responsible for the decline of human goodness and greatness in modern times. Indeed, in Rousseau's estimation, Hobbes' legacy constitutes an enduring threat to the happiness of man.

Hobbes' Modern Legacy

Not only do the very first lines of Hobbes' *Leviathan* contrast most tellingly with the Rousseauean elegies to the classical polities of antiquity as foreshadowed in the first lines of his masterpieces, they offer a cogent summary glimpse of exactly what Rousseau opposes with such fervor. In essence, *Leviathan*'s introduction, with its imagined Artificial Animal born of man's science and art, sketches what Hobbes hoped to accomplish by way of a new political philosophy. He envisioned a new sort of polity altogether, and hoped it would one day provide a universal model for political life. He likened it to an "Artificial Man; though of a greater stature and strength than the Natural", one which would be capable of supplanting, and he as saw things, improving on man's natural condition (Lev: Introduction). Thus, a few short lines at that beginning of Hobbes' most important work conveniently encapsulate what Rousseau, early in his literary career, calls the "dangerous dreams of Hobbes" (FD: δ59).

Dangerous Dreams? What harm can dreams, imagined nothings, possibly pose? Perhaps they were (and remain) so dangerous precisely because Hobbes' conception of what human science and artfulness (i.e. his pursuit of technical arts) might accomplish proved to be more valid and possible, and thus, much more damaging to humanity than any lively nightmare could ever have revealed. Today, we moderns live in an unmistakably Hobbesian world; indeed, in most respects, *Leviathan* provides the theoretical foundation for contemporary liberal democracy. It is a political arrangement

where individual liberty is considerable, but we take it to lie in the silence of the polity's particular conventions regarding right and wrong, what we call its laws. All men are equal before the law, but that equality is political equality, derived from the regime's founding covenants. We believe in justice, but justice lies in the equitable execution and enforcement of the polity's rules. The sovereign authority is not the man (or men) naturally best suited for the job, but it rises from the consent of those he governs; his most important role is to enforce the association's rules, and whenever necessary, by the threat of force. Privately, Hobbes' regime (and ours today) is a regime devoted to individualism. Publicly, however (and what may be more important), it is a regime dedicated to the advancement of learning—to cultivating man's artfulness and promoting the limitless development of the sciences.

Indeed, Hobbes aimed at providing the intellectual foundations requisite for the widespread and final institution of what Rousseau would later characterize as "the most deliberate project that ever entered the human mind" (SD: 2.30) *Leviathan* proposes a universal political science, one that might forever wrest man from his terrifying, if imaginary, natural state. For according to Hobbes, Nature ("the Art whereby God hath made and governes the World") had abandoned mankind to a condition in which human existence was horrible (Lev: Introduction). It was a condition in which there was no place for industry nor culture of the earth because nothing existed to protect a man's property; consequently, neither navigation, nor construction, nor commerce could emerge; the result: a life without science, without arts, without letters, and without society—what, according to Hobbes, amounted to a situation wherein the life of man threatened to be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Lev: 13.9). He had earlier declared that "*Reason* is the *pace*, Encrease of *Science,* the *way*, and the Benefit of mankind, the *end*", but since none of it—neither science, nor arts, nor letters—is possible without society, or more precisely, without secure society, he provided a plan for political life that would result in polities stable and prosperous enough that industry and science would finally find an unshakable home (Lev: 5.20). To Hobbes, the establishment of large (and oftentimes commercial) commonwealths was a way, perhaps the only way, to promote learning "for the benefit of mankind".

"[T]he felicity of mankind" and "the happiness of mankind" are also constant themes in Rousseau's writings, but he sees the conditions of felicity very differently (Obs: δ13; FD: δ30; cf. FD: δ1; SD: ded. δ22, exord. δ4). For Rousseau, Hobbes is no great savior, but (rather) a misguided seducer. For while he agrees with the Hobbesian (and Lockean) position regarding pre-political man's "right to everything" he deems necessary for his survival, he departs from his modern predecessors in that this "natural right of every man to every thing" need not necessarily (nor very often) extend to "one another's body" (Lev: 14.4). The state of nature, therefore, is not some horrible "all against all" state of war, but a quiet and peaceful place. According to Rousseau, Hobbes' conclusion cannot be derived from his own premises. What he says, he says "because of having improperly included in the savage man's care of self-preservation the need to satisfy a multitude of passions which are the product of society..." (SD: 1.35). Not man's nature, then, but society, specifically, what comes with modern society—the sciences, the arts, industry, commerce, letters, all of which prosper especially in a Hobbesian regime—are the real problem. In his *Second Discourse*, Rousseau paints the portrait of what natural man, man before society and all it permits, must really have been like: solitary but free, poor by modern standards but self-sufficient, not nasty but good precisely because he was brutish, and thus, happy however short was his life. His needs did not exceed his capacity to satisfy them, and so the impetus to dissemble or to deceive, to injure or to kill was minimal. Natural man *was* a peaceful animal.

Rousseau's portrait of natural man as depicted in the *First Part* of the *Second Discourse* certainly serves to dispute Hobbes' conclusions. But to digress slightly, the reader is also reminded that its solitary savage "perhaps never existed"; he is reminded that the man whom Rousseau describes at the beginning of that work is a man without imagination, a man "of few passions and self-sufficient", a man who "would have remained eternally in his primitive condition" if it were not for the "chance combination of several foreign causes which might never have arisen" (SD: 1.51). Indeed, there is an "immense distance"—probably an unbridgeable gulf—between the tribal state of nature discussed in the discourse's *Second Part* and that "*pure* state of nature" discussed before it (SD: exord. δ6, 1.26). What Rousseau's careful reader recalls is that "*purely* abstract

beings" and images "drawn... in general"—a *pure* state of nature, for instance—can be "conceived only through discourse" (My Emphasis; SD: 1.29-30).

Little more than halfway through the *First Part*, Rousseau tacitly admits man's *pure* state as he describes it there never existed historically; it was conceived through discourse expressly for the philosopher's readers. Indeed, it is a general idea, and "every general idea is purely intellectual." Just as human beings have the remarkable ability to apprehend the idea of a "tree in general" or the idea of a perfect triangle, circle, or line, it seems Rousseau means to do the same with the nature of man (SD: 1.30). What would man look like were he to be perfected? Much like Rousseau's solitary savage, perhaps—he would exhibit "few passions and [be] self-sufficient", and thus, he would be perfectly free. The *First Part* of the *Second Discourse* does more than demonstrate why human beings are necessarily social by nature insofar it is utterly impossible to account for the development of language in men like the solitary ones Rousseau depicts, something which has nonetheless occurred by the beginning of the *Second Part.*[1] Indeed, Rousseau's pure state of nature also provides an imagined (and in some ways perfected) portrait of man in light of which human beings (and the polities which guide their development) can be usefully evaluated. The same distinctly human ability which permits our daily evaluations of particular trees and circles in comparison to the purely abstract (and more or less perfected) ideas we generate in our minds after long experience with particular examples, is what licenses our evaluation of mankind's various particular historical situations. We do so according to general ideas formed after rigorous analysis of past and current political arrangements. This helps us to refine our conception of what men can be made to become, an understanding which permits further analysis of actual regimes in light of the extent to which they cultivate those human excellences. As such, even though "the goodness suitable for the *pure* state of nature was no longer that which suited nascent society", Rousseau's analysis of the tribal savage is favorable because his way of life supported an impressive real-world approximation of the self-sufficiency, the natural freedom, and the goodness that characterized his solitary savage; indeed, tribal men lived relatively undivided lives and were therefore able to enjoy a degree of psychic

[1] Rousseau later admits that man is social by nature in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (Cf. EOL: 9.1; and note 16 below).

repose and genuine felicity unimaginable to most modern Europeans. In Rousseau's words, the pre-metallurgy and pre-agriculture

> period of the development of human faculties, maintaining a golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our vanity, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch. The more one thinks about it, the more one finds that this state was the least subject to revolution, the best for man, and that he must have come out of it only by some fatal accident, which for the common good ought never to have happened (SD: 2.19).

It is not Rousseau's contention that political life, in itself, threatens to harm (even to ruin) the human race, but rather, that the modern version is inhospitable to almost everything that makes life worth living. In the end, the philosopher is forced to conclude that natural man was free and happy as long as he lived according to nature—in small associations determined by familial bonds, applying himself only to tasks a single person could accomplish, motivated by desires closely linked to physical necessity, etc.—and that the development of society, science, and art led to the multiplication of desires even as they stifled nature's voice. In short, from Hobbes onward, Nature no longer provides the standard according to which political life ought be organized, and against which political life must be evaluated. In fact, the very opposite supposition—that the natural state is inimical to human wellbeing, and that it is the task of science and art to rescue mankind—is no doubt much closer to the dominant modern view. The modern predicament Rousseau laments is a direct result of Hobbes' daring and dangerous dreams insofar as they demanded the cultivation and elevation of the artificial at the expense of everything natural—and thereby, to the detriment of the only practical standard for evaluating the lives of men and the polities that inspire them. In essence, Rousseau believes that "it is not without difficulty that we have succeeded in making ourselves so unhappy".[2] For

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[2] If Rousseau is right that "imagination, which causes so much havoc among us, does not speak to savage hearts", and if it is knowledge—acquired only as man satisfies multiplying needs and desires—that, in turn, accounts for expansion of man's imagination, then in the final analysis, the uses to which men put their array of acquired knowledge in the first place and ever since—technical arts and fine arts—are responsible for the seemingly unceasing expansion of his imagination as it relates to his pleasures. It is man's expanded imagination and the consequent multiplication of his needs which leads to the intensification of his *amours*. And it is this development which ultimately yields Hobbesian man complete with all his reasons to quarrel

> [w]hen, on the one hand, one considers the vast labors of men, so many sciences fathomed, so many arts invented, and so many forces employed, chasms filled, mountains razed, rocks broken, rivers made navigable, land cleared, lakes dug out, swamps drained, enormous buildings raised upon the earth, the sea covered with ships and sailors; and when, on the other hand, one searches with a little meditation for the true advantages that have resulted from all this for the happiness of the human species, one cannot fail to be struck by the astounding disproportion between these things, and to deplore man's blindness, which, to feed his foolish pride and an indefinable vain admiration for himself, makes him run avidly after all the miseries of which he is susceptible, and which beneficent nature had taken care to keep from him (SD: note *i*).

Thus, Rousseau implies that Hobbes erred gravely in laying the foundations for the modern polity as he did; Hobbes, more than anyone, had built on "solid ground", but it was solid because it was so low. True, the Hobbesian regime has proven to be a most fertile environment for science and industry, but it is positively noxious to wholesome *mores* and everything that makes ordinary men good and their lives happy—this is what Rousseau would have the majority of his readers remember. But, as the philosopher would soon discover if he had not anticipated as much, it is a difficult lesson to teach men who are readily blinded by vanity and base self-interest. For what Hobbes had taught tends to be accepted without difficulty, eagerly in fact: that "whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth good… there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil" (Lev: 6.7). He had taught people to regard the good as relative, and that no "moral" force—no objective conception of good or evil, noble or base, decent or obscene—ought stand in the way of a man's pursuing whatever his heart desires. The equality of desires that, according to Plato, characterizes real-world democracy, where all enjoy license to dabble in anything and everything—with utter indifference to "high" and "low" precisely because there is no high, no low—is the inevitable result. So alluring because so easy and self-indulging, it

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with his fellows. What is more, as this occurs, that second natural inclination Rousseau found in natural man—his compassion for other sentient beings—is all but silenced. Since this passion was originally the force responsible for "temper[ing] the ardor" man has for his own well-being—what causes such havoc among modern men precisely because it is now unrestrained—Rousseau reveals that if man does seem to be the avaricious, individualistic, and anti-social being Hobbes

was a lesson quickly learned, and then passionately defended. Hobbes had, indeed, built on the most solid ground. The result: a world where nothing besides the immediate threat of irresistible force—what modern Sovereigns must rely upon to enforce their polities' laws—is adequate to restrain the selfish machinations of self-interested men. Indeed, government's *raison d'être* actually becomes the maintenance of a political environment secure enough that each member of the association can safely pursue (and enjoy) whatever he calls good from the security of a comfortable, peaceful, and law-abiding society. Particularly unsettling is the fact that authoritative moral convictions with sufficient force to moderate these (ordinarily very low) pursuits are virtually non-existent today. Thus, besides the threat of force, only fear of a post-political return to the state of nature, an ultimate end to political stability and descent into civil war, is capable of erecting even a partially-effective barrier between man and his (mostly base) desires, and only because it threatens to stand in the way of his fulfilling them. Hobbes intended this prospect to be such a terrifying one, that "all men [would] agree [only] on this, that peace is good" and consequently, the "means of peace" amount to the "Morall Vertues" (Lev: 16.39).

What lies at the very foundation of Hobbes' political project, then—his presumption that while everybody will never agree on what constitutes the greatest good and the best way of living, the very vast majority will be able to agree on the greatest evil, violent death and fear of it—is a conclusion Rousseau stoutly resists. For solid as the foundation for Hobbes' new and potentially-universal political science would prove to be, Rousseau saw its potentially life-corrupting consequences early on. Hobbes' underlying premise—what he saw as the solution to the age-old political problem—Rousseau regards as itself a problem. The focus on protecting mere life at the expense of cultivating any particular *good life*, such as Hobbes seems to advocate, is a shift supposedly legitimated on the (dubious) premise that all men are equal, and that being equal, nothing (natural) remains to suggest that what the wise apprehend ought be pursued by the entire polity as its end. Since narrowly self-interested men will never agree on any substantive notion of "good", maintaining conditions felicitous to the

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depicts, he is so because he has made himself so, not because nature made him so (SD: 1.21, 1.43).

pursuit of everyone's subjective "good" (the preservation of mere life and promotion of great individual license) naturally becomes the regime's guiding principle. This turn is so very threatening because as Rousseau perceives, not only are men pleasure-seekers by nature, "it is known that most animals, not excepting man, are naturally lazy"; thus, "once a man has grown accustomed to prefer his life to his duty, he will soon also prefer to it the things that make life easy and agreeable" (SD: note *j*; Grimm: δ18). As a result, far from living a virtuous, free, and happy life, post-Hobbes, modern man, seduced by his passions and bereft of any "internal" or "personal" motive capable of opposing their unmitigated rule, is in effect condemned to a life of endless striving to gratify his desire for (what Rousseau regards as) small distinction and petty pleasure after small distinction and petty pleasure that ceases only in death—meaningless death.

In Rousseau's judgment, this modern disposition toward life disposes men toward abject slavery; "they move all the farther away from freedom because, mistaking for freedom an unbridled license which is its opposite, their revolutions almost always deliver them to seducers who only make their chains heavier" (SD: ded. δ6; cf. Rep: 562cd, 565de). But since modern men are their own despots, since they unwittingly will a servitude that renders them incapable of appreciating or lamenting their loss, it is, perhaps, the most dangerous sort of despotism—self-imposed despotism. Hobbes' prescriptions are so dangerous precisely because Hobbesian man, free to pursue his every desire within the more or less generous limits of the law, believes himself to be happiest, in precisely this regime. After all, what appeal do higher freedoms, virtue, and patriotism really have (all of which are very difficult to achieve), when the alternatives are modernity's relatively easily attained, and naturally seductive, pleasures: sex and violence on television, fast cars, fast women, and the almost limitless luxuries the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts has made possible?

Rousseau wonders what "sequence of marvels" led humanity has developed so powerful and foolishly a resolve to "buy imaginary repose at the price of real felicity" (SD: exord. δ4). It is a question he answers by the end of his *Second Discourse*. Men's latent *amours*—his *amour de soi* and *amour propre*—are the problem; they amount to

what an earlier philosopher had called a "malady eternal in man"[3], and together they explain our relentless pursuit of the "two objects" toward which "all our labors are directed": commodities that make life agreeable, and consideration among others (CRGD: ch.8; SD: note *p*). But since the commodities and the honors that will animate most men's desires are bound to be artifacts of one or another particular historically-situated political association, what Plato's Socrates calls a cave, their effect on the lives of men depends on the particular character of the polity in question. Polities like Rome and Sparta were able to direct, even to sublimate, men's passions. Strong and admirable polities, healthy and handsome men were the result. Rousseau's elegies to the martial republics of antiquity are unforgettable: Sparta was a "republic of demi-gods rather than men, so superior did their virtues seem to human nature" (FD: δ24). Within a few generations of its founding, Rome, another martial republic, would become home to "the most virtuous people that ever was" (PN: δ35*n*.) Rousseau's Europe, by contrast, has permitted, even promoted, the "unsupervised" unleashing of men's *amours*. And since no force exists to direct or temper their activity, their unrestrained reign over men's hearts is as inevitable as their typical manifestation is base. This explains his century's moral poverty.

The sequence of marvels which, for the genuine felicity of mankind in general ought never to have occurred, but which has brought upon modern Europe its decadence and depravity, bears directly upon what the philosopher discusses in his *First Discourse*: the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts. If it can be said that Hobbes' chief concern was the life of man—mere life, which inevitably fosters base life—then perhaps it can be said that Rousseau's chief concern is that of restoring the dignity of man. His problem might be expressed as follows: how can this "malady eternal in man" be contained, even diminished if not cured, within the context of modern politics?

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[3] Rousseau's understanding of *amour propre* is more nuanced in that it is also the passion responsible for the best of mankind's accomplishments. Coming to terms with Rousseau's *amour propre* may well be an indispensable requirement of achieving an adequate understanding of his philosophy.

Rousseauean Principles

With Strauss, "one is tempted to say that only through…accepting the fate of modern man was [Rousseau] led back to antiquity" (NRH: p.252). He truly believed Hobbes' influence had been a pernicious one—to be sure, what men have become is unsettling to say the least. Nonetheless, having realized that politics were transformed, "perhaps forever" with the rise of the Medicis, Rousseau stoutly resists several of Hobbes' most important conclusions. Of these, the claim that freedom consists of nothing more than a "lack of external impediments" may be particularly important.

Indeed, Rousseau's understanding of freedom is radically different. The natural freedom of the solitary savage, for instance, emerges from his self-sufficiency: he is free because he is his own master. His natural forces remain perpetually at his disposal, and he is at liberty to employ them however he sees fit; as long as the life of man remained this uncomplicated, he was neither enslaved to another man, nor was he enslaved to passion or base desire. Civil freedom, which man gains when he leaves his natural state to join an association of men, emerges from his participation in a community ruled collectively by the enlightened wills of all her constituents. The association defends and protects each associate "with the full common force", but each associate remains "as free as before" insofar as every member of the community participates in the social contract equally. As long as the one clause of the social contract—"the total alienation of each associate with all of his rights to the whole community"—is respected by all, all remain free (SC: 1.6.4-8). By subordinating his particular good (and his means of pursuing it) to the common good (and his power to the common force), "each, by giving himself to all, gives himself to no one" and thus, every man "obey[s] only himself", which is identical to obeying the enlightened General Will. Finally, Rousseau's third sort of freedom, moral freedom, is that "which alone makes man truly the master of himself"; in short, it consists of "obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself" (SC: 1.8.2).

To Rousseau, freedom is "the most noble of man's faculties"; to renounce one's freedom, "the most precious of all his gifts", is to "degrade one's nature" and leave oneself "on the level of beasts enslaved by instinct" (SD: 2.41-42). In Strauss' words, Rousseau recognizes that "freedom is a higher good than life" (NRH: p.278) Similarly, the philosopher's constant praise of classical virtue—praise that peaks with the

declaration, "I adore Virtue"—reveals Rousseau's affinity for ancient ways. If positive freedom and virtue involve incomparably more than the absence of external impediments, if they turn out to be the very requisites of a good life according to Rousseau, if they are even essential to "real felicity" and "true happiness" (as opposed to the 'imaginary repose' ordinary men are generally disposed by their passions to *buy* at the cost of freedom and virtue), then modern man is living in truly difficult times. Self-interested and self-absorbed, his fellows are disingenuous, deceitful, and duplicitous—that is, if they are not downright criminal. For where fear of a powerful Leviathan is all that counsels obedience to the laws, the laws will rarely be good ones, and "uncommitted crimes [will] dwell deep inside men's hearts..." (PN: δ29). As a result, the simple pleasures of small community living are impossible: "No more sincere friendships; no more real esteem; no more well-based confidence." What is more, love of country and public-spiritedness cannot persist where men's base passions, left unrestrained, turn the citizenry into a radically individualistic bourgeoisie. One recalls *Republic*'s Book Eight, and its depiction of what seems an inevitable decline from a martial and patriotic timocracy—the closest real-world approximation to the aristocratic 'city in speech'—to oligarchy, then to democracy, which finally decays into tyranny.

A version of this very thesis—specifically, that the development of the sciences and the arts are responsible for a practically irresistible degeneration of regimes, one that threatens to ruin the human race—seems to serve as the veritable "*pierre angulaire*" [keystone] to Rousseau's thought. However "imperfectly" he expressed that thesis in the *First Discourse*, and whatever other writings must be considered in detail to arrive at "an adequate understanding" of Rousseau's view on the sciences and the arts, Leo Strauss goes so far as to begin his essay, *On the Intention of Rousseau,* with the declaration that there are "no other Rousseauean principles than those underlying his short discourse on the sciences and the arts…" (IR: p.255).

More than once, Rousseau professed his surprise that his short essay had won the prize. He was, after all, arguing against the very premise underlying popular enlightenment, something his century was very proud of. Moreover, his vehement critique sought to undermine everything almost every one of his contemporaries stood for, men who were very proud of themselves for their enlightenment. Nevertheless,

Rousseau had the courage to argue his case forcefully and relentlessly—in the discourse itself, in his subsequent rejoinders, and in many of his later works. And true to his convictions, he refused to succumb to the duplicity and politeness he condemned absolutely. As he puts it, "I had tried to deserve [the prize], but had done nothing to obtain it", or more boldly, "I was far from expecting an Academy to display impartiality which the learned do not by any means always observe when their self-interest is involved" (LNR: δ2). For his efforts, not only did Jean-Jacques Rousseau emerge from obscurity to become one of the Enlightenment's brightest lights, but he quickly earned the lasting contempt of his "silly" and "vain" colleagues, his century's myriad philosophes.

Not surprisingly, many of them were harshly critical of his short essay, and even of his person. Their reaction was "quite understandable", given that most of his contemporaries were under the impression that the philosopher—a man of letters himself—advocated "the abolition of all learning", including the burning of libraries and their books, the destruction of Colleges and Academies, even the complete overthrow of existing society (IR: p.261; LR: δ72; cf. Obs: δ63). Nonetheless, Rousseau would go on to maintain that "before stating my views, [he] had meditated on the subject long and thoroughly…, [that his adversaries] have never raised against [him] a single reasonable objection which [he] had not foreseen and answered in advance", that the few replies he did make "were perhaps too many", and even that "[he has] written on various subjects, but always with the same principles: always the same morality, the same belief, the same maxims, and if you will, the same opinions". He would, however, go on admit that he had taken "some precautions at first", that he "did not want to say everything in order to make sure that everything got a hearing", even that the ideas and the principles underlying his work were fully developed "only successively and always to but a small number of readers" (LR δ2*n*; PN: δ3*n*; LB: p.22; IR: p.269; Havens: p51-56; PSLB: δ9).

Though it is a distinction all "true philosophers" are careful to draw, detailed consideration of Rousseau's distinction between common men and the "small number of readers" for whom the philosopher "successively" develops his principles is especially important to an adequate understanding of this work in particular. For in the *First Discourse* specifically, and perhaps everywhere else, Rousseau speaks as a common man

to common men, and as a philosopher to philosophers and gentlemen. (cf. IR: p.263). On occasion, he even reflects on his practice of esotericism exoterically: the philosopher asserts that he "went to the trouble to try and condense into a single Sentence, a single line, a single word tossed off as if by chance, the result of a long chain of reflections… that was enough for those capable of understanding, and [he] never wanted to speak to the others"; that to enlarge certain notes "would be to insult the intelligence of the only Readers [he cares] about"; that "one should not insult one's Readers by telling them everything"; that a note here and there is intended "for philosophers" only while others are advised to "ignore it"; that he has arranged his works such that "vulgar readers would have no need to consider" his more difficult, most sensitive, teachings; and that one must not write for vulgar readers "if one wants to live beyond one's century" as Hobbes, Spinoza, Bacon, Descartes, and Newton have (PSLB: δ9; PN: δ23*n*; LR: δ67; SD: 1.53; FD: δ2, δ59-60; LR: δ37*n*). It can probably be said with a fair degree of confidence that Rousseau was most interested in writing for other great minds—both contemporary geniuses and those who would read his works in later centuries. Indeed, he calls his *Second Discourse* a "work of greater importance", one which "found in the whole of Europe only a few readers who understood it, [none of whom] wanted to talk about it" (CNFS: bk.8 p.380). Nonetheless, at other times Rousseau asserts he does not "speak here to the few but to the public", that he has "had to change [his] style", that he "has said fewer things with more words", that "as for us, *common men*, not endowed by heaven with such great talents and not destined for so much glory, let us remain in our obscurity" (My Emphasis; Ld'A: p.6; FD: δ61). In one letter, he goes so far as to imply that he took pains to *deceive* some of his readers some of the time; as he reveals in his *Letter to Beaumont*, "after my first *Discourse*, I was a man of paradoxes, who made a game of proving what he did not think" (LB: p.22).

Difficult as Rousseau has made it to decipher his real opinion and genuine intention on so many important questions, interrogating the philosopher's esotericism is so important because at least one of his reasons for practicing the art bears importantly on the thesis he expounds in the *First Discourse*. Science and philosophy are "not made for man", or at least, "if science suits a few great geniuses... it is always harmful to the Peoples that cultivate it" (Obs: δ8; Grimm: δ6, δ18). Genuine enlightenment is

dangerous because the truths revealed and questions raised are more detrimental than elevating to the many, to "crude folk", as it were; it is Rousseau's view that the many must be protected from the dangerous musings of philosophically-inclined men.[4] Put simply, not truth, but opinion, is "queen of the world", ruler of men and even of almost every king that has ever lived (Ld'A: p.73-74). Salutary opinion, and only salutary opinion in the form of customs, traditions, religious beliefs, shared opinions, and the like, is capable of combating the almost-always-pernicious influence of men's selfish passions—passions Hobbes, pessimistic at their being successfully restrained, designed a regime premised on their being unleashed.

Rousseau found the result unacceptable. He contends that only in transforming men's passions, or at least their objects, can ordinary men be directed toward living free and virtuous lives; common men must be, so to speak, "forced to be free". Rousseau's nearly-ubiquitous recognition that the pursuit and supposed pursuit of truth, that both genuine science and sophistry, are utterly deleterious to wholesome *mores*, even "doubly dangerous to the multitude", is traceable to this very recognition—that opinion is queen of the world, that where a good queen reigns the people will be virtuous and free, but that the maintenance of salutary opinion and the endeavor to challenge all opinion in the name of pursuing knowledge are utterly incompatible. The very supposition that underlies popular enlightenment, then—Hobbes' sophistical argument for the approximate physical and intellectual equality of all men, which would presume that all men are suitable vessels for learning—is at the very root of modernity's moral poverty. For "armed with their deadly paradoxes", champions of popular enlightenment threaten to undermine the

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[4] Virtually every other reason for practicing esotericism bears particularly on Rousseau's thesis here. Persecution was not exactly extinct in the philosopher's day, for one thing; as a result, writing carefully, especially when discussing matters concerning religious orthodoxy, was important for Rousseau's safety, and for the sake of avoiding public censorship of his works in order that his views would be widely disseminated. What is more, Rousseau objects to the "elementary authors" of the Enlightenment and the fact that they have presumed to remove the difficulties which once stood in the way of pursuing knowledge. For if the greatest of philosophers must cultivate intellectual strength, and perhaps even a sort of psychic courage, the popularizing of learning is detrimental and the practice provided by the necessity of deciphering esoteric writings can be essential (FD: δ60). Finally, Rousseau, perhaps more than most philosophers, claims he is motivated by a sort of pride (derived from his refined *amour propre*) which may have led him to conceal his true teachings from those yet unprepared to share his insights (PN: δ2-3, δ24-5). These and other reasons for Rousseau's esotericism are discussed in *Part Three* below.

very possibility of virtue and freedom in ordinary men (and almost always for basically selfish reasons—even if only to show off their cleverness: petty vanity). By presuming all men are suited to be enlightened, and by working toward the dissemination of science and philosophy, they risk annihilating the only possible foundations for virtue, freedom, and thus, for true happiness—faith and faith in opinion. In short, to devote one's talents to philosophy is essentially to work at "destroying and debasing all that is sacred among men" (FD: δ41).

This indictment of the sciences and the arts, advanced for the first time, though perhaps "imperfectly", in the *First Discourse*, constitutes *Part One* of this thesis.[5] In the essay and the rejoinders which his contemporaries' responses to it would inspire, Rousseau establishes that natural inequality led to riches, riches to luxury and idleness, luxury to the Fine Arts, and idleness to the sciences. In the *First Part* of his essay, he establishes an empirical correlation between these factors and the corruption of *mores* in modern times (as well as in ancient times). Rousseau himself claims that the *Second Part* of the essay is an endeavor to prove 'theoretically' a "necessary connection" between them (PN: δ18; Grimm: δ14). It is an indictment leveled in the name of virtue and for the sake of virtue, but one which led his contemporaries to suppose Rousseau would advocate the end of learning and even society. In this capacity—as a defender of virtue and ordinary men—Rousseau is revealed to be what he later claims himself to be, a "friend of humanity". Indeed, the philosopher's professed concern for "the happiness of mankind" recurs frequently throughout his corpus. What he had declared to his fellow citizens in the dedication to his *Second Discourse*: that "the interest [he takes] in [their]

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[5] Others had advanced similar theories prior to Rousseau. *Republic*'s city in speech, for instance, is by all accounts free of injustice until the addition of certain *relishes* at Glaucon's behest—additions which necessarily enlarge the city, permit luxury within its walls, and render it feverish. According to Plato, it is developments like these which serve as the catalyst for the rise and then the inevitable decline of even the best polities.

It may be a particularly memorable exchange from one of Montesquieu's earliest works which most cogently encapsulates Rousseau's indictment of science and art. In the *Persian Letters*, Rhedi, like Usbek (the work's principal interlocuter), is an Easterner traveling in decadent Europe for the first time. In a letter Rhedi writes to Usbek, he praises ignorance, the "simplicity characteristic of ølden times", and that "serenity which reigned in the hearts of our first fathers" (PL: letter 105). In fact, he virtually begins the letter with a most Rousseauean assertion: "You will think me a barbarian, but I do not know whether the utility that we derive from them compensates mankind for the abuse that is constantly made of them" (PL: letter 105).

common prosperity" is the result of "the tender affection of a true patriot", and that "the ardent and legitimate zeal of a man who conceives no greater happiness for himself than that of seeing all of you happy" is what motivates him, may well be applicable to a much larger population than the citizenry of Geneva (SD: ded. δ22).

His genuine concern for the wellbeing of men in general may well help to explain the impetus behind many of Rousseau's writings. It is certainly conceivable, for instance, that works like the *Second Discourse*, the *Social Contract*, and the *Letter to d'Alembert*—all apparently written for or dedicated to Geneva—as well as his *Considerations on the Government of Poland and its Projected Reformation* and the constitution he drafted for Corsica, the "one country left in Europe capable of receiving legislation", may have been genuine efforts to help those polities institute good laws, and thereby enhance the lives of their citizens (SC: 2.10.6). *But Rousseau admitted that all hope was lost for Geneva within his lifetime.* In his *Letters from the Mountain* he addresses his fatherland expressly: "nothing is more free than your legitimate state; nothing is more servile than your present state"; similarly, by the time he writes his *Letter to D'Alembert*, Rousseau, sorrowfully, considers himself "useless" to the very polity for which he had seemed to have so much hope (LMn: 7.813; Ld'A: p.132). Recalling what the philosopher notes in his *First Discourse*—that "every useless citizen may be considered a pernicious man"—the reader cannot but wonder: *Is Rousseau useless, and thus pernicious?* (FD: δ40). The philosopher maintains that neither description applies. Indeed, Rousseau, a man who has "never willingly missed a performance of Molière" (a play-wright whose influence on *mores* he condemns almost absolutely), maintains, in spite of his professed uselessness, that "love of the public is the only passion which causes [him] to speak to the public" (Ld'A: p.131*n*). But he does more than express his affection for the multitude, he asserts that his effect will be anything but pernicious; frequently, he speaks of his own "duty" as a duty to defend his "principles", something which requires that he speak not exclusively to Genevans, but "to others for their sakes rather than for his own… so that they might at least wish to become as good as they could be" (PSLB: δ2-3, δ11). More than once, Rousseau insists that it was his "love of humanity" and his "intense desire to see men happier, and especially worthier of being so" that drove him to take up his pen (LR: δ75-6).

A discussion of Rousseau's apparent *uselessness* to those polities for which he seems to profess such high hopes will make up *Part Two* of this thesis. Careful examination of one of the philosopher's last writings, his piece on the projected reformation of Poland, reveals both why the advancement of the sciences and the arts are ultimately irresistible everywhere, and that Rousseau did, in fact, maintain the principles and opinions he had set forth at the very beginning of his literary career until the very end of it. Moreover, if Rousseau's *Considerations* does reveal the malady plaguing modern Europe to be an epidemic no polity could hope to insulate or inoculate itself against, then it also indicates his position regarding the sciences and the arts must be far subtler that it initially appears to be. For if Rousseau means his corpus to do more than clarify questions and promote philosophy in the few suited for study, and if, as the philosopher insists, he is actually a "friend of humanity" who adores virtue, one who derives his own greatest happiness from inspiring genuine felicity in all mankind, then his true position regarding the advancement of learning is even more radical than, and almost the opposite of, what it first appears to be. For if the reestablishment of such pursuits corrupts *mores*, and if the sorts of reforms he envisions for Geneva, or Corsica, or Poland could never have made those polities into the happy, virtuous and imaginary Geneva Rousseau praises so highly in his dedication to the *Second Discourse*, his indictment of the sciences and the arts, together with his concern for men and their *mores*, ought to have compelled him to put down his pen forever. Unless, that is, Rousseau imagines that science properly pursued, and art well-conceived, can actually have positive effects.

And so Rousseau, a friend of humanity insofar as he defends virtue and salutary opinion from the corrosive effects of truth and those who would pursue her, also declares himself "a friend of truth", even that "having upheld... the cause of truth" is the motive that originally "determine[d]" him (PSLB: δ11; FD: δ6). Since these two affinities, both of which Rousseau professes (sometimes even in the same place), are not obviously compatible—as the efforts of the few who court truth will almost always raise dangerous questions which will erode the very opinions indispensable to the promotion of virtue in the many—*Part Three* of this thesis will offer an examination of Rousseau's subtle defense of truth and its pursuit, what may amount to a compelling, but still very cautious apology for the sciences and the arts. It may be that carefully concealed amidst overtly

hostile rhetoric, is the recognition he expresses explicitly only after the short essay that won the prize had come under attack from virtually every quarter. Although he intimates as much in many of his writings, in his new preface to Narcissus, a play Rousseau had written in his foolish youth, the philosopher includes a vital and particularly revealing note. He professes amazement at his contemporaries' confused, but entirely predictable response—one he suspects to be born of their silly vanity and perpetual lust for petty honors. According to the philosopher, his contemporaries,

> [w]hen they saw the sciences and arts under attack, they took it personally, whereas all of them could, without any self-contradiction, hold the same view I do, that while these things have done society great harm, it is now essential to use them against the harm they have done, as one does a medication or those noxious insects that have to be crushed on the bite [they leave] (PN: 41*n*).

In this connection, one recalls another of Rousseau's responses. Seeking to dispel crass interpretations of his thesis by underlining what he had barely alluded to—the compatibility of learning, wholesome *mores*, and happiness—he asks, "how could I have said that Science and Virtue are incompatible in every Individual, I who exhorted Princes to invite the truly Learned to their Court, and to place their trust in them, so that we might for once see what Science and Virtue combined can do for the happiness of mankind? [le bonheur du genre humain]" (Obs: δ15). And so the other side of Rousseau's position is subtly emphasized if not completely exposed. Might Rousseau actually mean to imply that in modern Europe, the happiness of mankind actually depends on the sciences and the arts? Indeed, at the end of the essay that won the prize, Rousseau does advocate philosophic kingship; he permits himself to imagine science (or philosophy) and political power "working together for the felicity of mankind" [« la félicité du Genre-humain »], but he is also careful to warn his reader that "so long as power is alone on the one side, intellect and wisdom on the other, learned men will rarely think of great things, Princes will more rarely do noble ones, and the people will continue to be vile, corrupt and unhappy" (FD: δ60).

If the solution to modernity's virtue-diminishing and soul-withering problem has anything to do with the combination of "great talents" and "great Virtues", however rare the union; if science can actually be "put to good use" under the proper circumstances; or

most boldly, if Rousseau's later suggestion that only philosophy can revive and refresh the pale life of modern man ("if anything can make up for ruined *mores*... the Sciences do more good than harm"); then Rousseau's larger task begins by defending the very sciences and arts he seems to disparage unambiguously. The careful and proper, even if necessarily supervised, reestablishment of learning may well be mankind's only hope for a reestablishment of wholesome *mores* (Obs. δ15; LR: δ25; FD: δ59-60). For not only must Rousseau defend freedom and virtue from philosophy—as he does speaking as a common man before common men—but more importantly perhaps, he must defend philosophy from vulgar men who spatter her with mud under cover of popular "enlightenment". When philosophy—that relentless pursuit of truth only a few are suited to undertake—degenerates into something fashionable, little more than a pastime and one supposedly accessible to anyone and everyone who would dabble in it, and moreover, when it is no longer pursued out of a genuine love of truth, but as a means to satisfy a petty "craving for distinction", it is polluted, and thus, no longer philosophy—at least, it is certainly not what Rousseau calls "true philosophy."

As a philosopher, then, and before philosophic and gentle men, Rousseau is a friend and a teacher. Anything but a common man himself, he endeavors to defend the possibility of great men and great deeds from the superficiality of the Enlightenment and its latent egalitarianism—an egalitarianism born in and out of Hobbes' dangerous dreams. He attempts to preserve the possibility that the "few men... who feel the strength to walk alone", those "learned men of the first rank" might actually realize their tremendous potential. For Rousseau is a man who "wants to live beyond his century", and so he attempts to provide what those other "preceptors of the human race" provided for subsequent generations and the rare geniuses that arise among them: writings concealing insights that might inspire his friends and allies to "go beyond" their teachers by revealing to them great tasks and inspiring them to become men worthy of meeting them (PSLB: δ11; FD: δ60). His defense of philosophy and all its grandeur is, as a result, even more powerfully anti-Enlightenment than his indictment of the sciences and the arts had been. As Leo Strauss puts it, Rousseau's "attack on the thesis of the enlightenment [must be seen] as a part, although the most important part, of his attack on modern politics in the name of classical politics" (IR: p.287). Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to

conclude that Rousseau's defense of mankind's highest pursuit is conceived for the sole benefit of those "few geniuses" suited to undertake such lofty enterprises; in fact, Rousseau's own philosophizing, and most especially, the lasting political influence of his thought, offers a particularly striking example of a man who is at once a friend of truth, a friend of all humanity, and a "true philosopher".

PART ONE:

Rousseau's Indictment of the Sciences and the Arts

From the Natural Inequalities Among Men to Riches

While Rousseau may not have deviated from the principles he laid out in his *First Discourse*, the philosopher does subsequently acknowledge that the problem as he established it in this first important work, is not fully treated, nor even fully expressed. A short time after Rousseau's essay won the prize, he expanded its thesis importantly.[6] Speaking on men's *mores*, or more precisely, on the "genealogy" of the problem that leads to their erosion, the philosopher asserts that "the first source of evil is inequality; from inequality arose riches... From riches are born luxury and idleness; from luxury arose the fine Arts, and from idleness the Sciences (Obs: δ51). Rousseau's second submission to the Academy of Dijon came five years after the first, and in his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, he indicates that one must begin much further back than he originally had.[7] Natural inequalities are the first origin of the political inequalities which currently exist among men, and since the riches which

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[6] Strauss observes that some of the points Rousseau put forward in the *First Discourse* are not coherently treated anywhere else in his corpus. Nonetheless, he goes on to note that "it is only by combining the information supplied by the discourse with that supplied by Rousseau's later writings that one can arrive at an understanding of the principles underlying each and all of his writings" (IR: p.270). On its own, then, the discourse, even in Rousseau's estimation, is an incomplete treatment of the question which underlies his collected works, works unified by a single set of principles which are, admittedly, obscured by what Rousseau himself describes as a "game" designed to mislead most of his readers regarding his true opinion on this important question (LB: p.22).

[7] Near the beginning of the *First Discourse*, Rousseau admits that the version of the work he submitted for public consumption includes two "easily recognizable" additions. There has been some dispute regarding what passages were subsequently added; it does, however, seem likely that the discourse's only reference to the natural inequalities among men is one of them (Havens, p.151). In fact, Rousseau's contention near the end of the work that it is difficult to imagine what might originally be responsible for the corruption of men's *mores* "if not the disastrous inequality introduced among men by the distinction of talents" effectively foreshadows the version of this argument as it is expanded further in his *Second Discourse* (FD: δ54). Rousseau would later offer a summary of the impetus behind both works in his *Letter to Malesherbes*: he intended to show with "clarity" and "force" that "man is naturally good and it is by [the abuses of our institutions] alone that men become mean [or malicious; « méchans »]. He goes on to assert that the "first discourse, the one on inequality, and the treatise on education [*Emile*], these three works are inseparable and together even form a whole" (My Translation; OC: 1:1136).

were the effective first catalyst for the sciences and the arts are likely the most consequential of political inequalities, natural inequalities are, at bottom, responsible for making the restoration of science and art possible.

Before this occurred, the (tribal) life of man was tranquil in that he was undivided and his passions were limited, he was free as long as he was self-sufficient, and he was happy as long as he was free; in the philosopher's words, it must have been mankind's "happiest and most durable epoch" (SD: 2.19). And while "things in this state could have remained equal if talents had been equal", apparently talents were not (SD: 2.25). An untold number of centuries quietly passed, "the species was already old, and man remained ever a child", but finally, lightening struck, a volcano exploded, and someone had the imagination and the audacity to imitate nature; that "fatal accident, which for the common good ought never to have happened", did (SD: 1.46; 2.19). It is impossible to say how many times men discovered fire before the art of "creating" it and preserving it was learned, remembered, and transmitted between generations. And it is impossible to say how many generations lived happily and quietly, but eventually men made use of this knowledge. The almost inconceivable development of two arts possible now and for the first time—metallurgy and agriculture—changed everything forever. Metal in man's arsenal, and wheat to sustain him, modernity was only a series of small progressions away.

Metal opens a world of technical possibilities, man's industriousness discovers thitherto unimaginable territory, new arts are developed and specialized craftsmen appear to practice them. Economic interdependence naturally arises as men are needed to feed these additions, and agriculture makes this possible. Thus, communities continue to grow in size as they grow increasingly complex, and with their simple communities, men cede the primitive simplicity and self-sufficiency that had permitted their uncomplicated, undivided, and therefore tranquil existence. Property in land matters (or matters much more) where men live by farming, and its importance is redoubled where possessing a surplus of wheat permits a man to trade for new commodities his father had not known. But since talents are unequal, some grow rich while others remain poor—meaning some remain as they were, but feel poor by comparisons they readily and quite naturally make. These relative inequalities of wealth, reputation, and power are magnified even as they

cease to correspond to natural abilities for a host of reasons. Talented or wealthy fathers, for instance, enrich their own progeny irrespective of their merit. In the end, the many are left to toil incessantly only to survive, while a privileged few enjoy wealth, leisure, and luxury by profiting at their expense. But their position is precarious precisely because it is so artificial. Finally, those who have grown wealthy contrive to use the collective force to constrain the poor majority of men, and an authority is erected to protect the property and the riches of the few in the name of the common good. And just as Hobbes had imagined, this "most deliberate project" protects and promotes much more than just riches.

From Riches to Luxury and Idleness

It is not that Rousseau's (tribal) savage does not experience those *amours* which make modern men vicious and criminal in their pursuit of commodities and other men's esteem. Rather, the savage's way of life is admirable because he realizes he cannot hope to profit by indulging his *amours* to the detriment of his fellows' wellbeing. In his preface to *Narcissus*, written two years before the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau notes that

> among savages self-interest speaks as insistently as it does among us... public esteem is the only good to which everyone aspires and which they all deserve. It is perfectly possible that a Savage might commit a bad action, but it is not possible that he will acquire the habit of doing evil because it would profit him nothing... I say it reluctantly: the good man is he who has no need to deceive anyone, and the savage is that man (PN: δ30*n*).

This is because betraying a comrade in the context of tribal life is both difficult for lack of opportunity and motive, and counterproductive insofar a man cannot escape the consequences of the reputation he will surely acquire. As a result, far from making men vicious or criminal, self-interest counsels almost unstinting cooperation. Similarly, dissembling for the sake of public esteem is impossible as long as society remains simple enough that every member performs the same tasks. Where men hunt in the morning, fashion their tools in the afternoon, and sing and dance all night, there is a single standard of excellence, men are easily compared according to that standard, and the best hunters, craftsmen, singers and dancers are readily apparent to everyone. Differences in public esteem correspond to differences in natural ability or other valued qualities—which is to

say, natural inequalities correspond to political inequalities—and the polity's honors serve to encourage its excellences. Since nothing can be gained by cheating, and since excellence cannot be feigned in such a simple and uncomplicated community, men who desire public esteem have no choice but to direct their energies toward meriting it. The result: better men.

Once society's complexity has increased to the extent it had by the time Rousseau took up his pen, however, it becomes difficult to restrain those natural *amours*. All human beings experience pleasure, and so all human beings are susceptible to being seduced by the prospect of enjoying more of it, be it the physical pleasure wealth and luxury can provide, or the psychological pleasure connected to one's fellows' esteem. Problems detrimental to public concord and individual happiness inevitably result. For whenever those things men come to call *good* are not perfectly sharable between those who make up the community, tension is created within the community, (and individuals are divided between what their desires suggest to them and what their polity demands of them).[8] Where riches are concerned, these conflicts are inevitable because material things cannot be shared without a loss to one of the (increasingly wanton) parties. To make matters worse, where men are not equally talented, they will never be content to share them equally. The very "words poor and rich are relative" and just as "wherever men are equal there is neither rich nor poor", wherever men are unequal, classes inevitably become entrenched.[9] But since social classes rarely reflect men's respective merit, and

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[8] This problem may well be inevitable insofar as some pleasures and pains—especially physical experiences of pleasure and pain—cannot be fully shared between members of a community no matter how strong their social spirit.

[9] While this would certainly hold if Rousseau means "equal" in terms of physical equality—that is, equally talented—since this is never the case, he must mean politically or socially equal, a condition most closely approximated in man's tribal state. Immediately one recalls the *Second Discourse's* frontispiece and its caption, "he goes back to his equals". What Rousseau says about the situation depicted in the notes to that work is quite illustrating. The principle is returning to his (more or less) natural equals insofar as Europeans have grown soft (inferior) as a direct result of their long exposure to riches and luxury. This is nicely transmitted by the once savage, now "civilized", but still much faster Hottentot's ability to easily escape his "host" (just as a fellow African had managed to do in *note h*, leaving a European sailor "astounded by such marvelous speed" and without his tobacco). He is also returning to his political equals, but his asking a single favor, that he be allowed to retain his necklace and cutlass, illustrates that even among one's natural equals, savage man desires social superiority—he *is* vain and desires to be "looked at". Though Rousseau insist that his actions indicate that "nothing can overcome the invincible repugnance they have against adopting our morals and living in our way", the Hottentot retains a

since men tend to overestimate their own merit even as they underestimate their fellows', resentment and jealousies are equally impossible to prevent. Their vanity growing, and their self-interest as strong as ever, living in the larger social groupings of cities which provide cover for men's scheming and plotting, suddenly deception and crime promise dividends, and where crime pays, crimes will be committed.

At the same time, since the very notion of public honor implies a hierarchy, only a few men can enjoy the polity's highest honors (as whatever all can attain cannot be a mark of excellence or distinction). In highly complex societies, however, not all men engage in the same activity; as a result, a difficult question arises: what standard of excellence should be employed? Like life's material commodities, the polity's honors are in principle un-sharable, at least without their being diminished.[10] As a result, public honor is a good that promises to create tension in any polity where there is no obvious, and widely accepted, method of distributing distinctions. In the end, wealth and luxury become the de facto least common denominators of status where communities are large and complicated; easily comparable, once the polity begins to honor riches, they quickly

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weapon which will eventually result in the erosion of his natural abilities just as the fruit of technical development has enervated the natural abilities of those living according to "our way". The cutlass and necklace will allow him to demand more—more of his comrades' honor and a larger share of the community's shareable goods. What Rousseau manages to show, then, is that the malady that manifests itself in civil society, and which causes a special problem once agriculture and metallurgy have emerged together, is truly eternal to the hearts of men.

[10] Shakespeare's *The Life of Henry the Fifth* illustrates some political consequences of the nature of honor, and those who love it, quite beautifully. On the brink of battle, King Henry, a man who is not insensitive to glory, gives the following exhortation in response to Westmorland's expressed desire that their army were made up of more men.

> If we are marked to die; we are enough
> To do our country loss; and if to live,
> The fewer men, the greater share of honor,
> God's will, I pray thee, wish not one man more.
> By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
> Nor do I care who doth feed my cost;
> It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
> Such outward things dwell not in my desires.
> But if it be a sin to covet honor
> I am the most offending soul alive.
> No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England.
> God's peace, I would not lose so great an honor
> As one man more, methinks, would share from me
> For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!...
> (4.3.18-33)

become the only object of most men's esteem. Almost everywhere men are 'civilized' and property rights entrenched, inequalities of wealth will emerge (if not immediately, then eventually). Concentrated riches, in turn, lead to luxury, and luxury "corrupts everything."

The very *amour de soi* responsible for man's preservation in his natural state, is, in civil society, a potentially soul-withering malady; necessary for one's survival or not, men cannot ignore the commodities they see others enjoying around them. Whether they make life possible, easier, or simply more pleasant, men and women (perhaps especially women), will always want what others have.[11] As Rousseau puts it in a note to his *Letter to d'Alembert*, "It does not suffice that the people have bread and live in their stations. They must live pleasantly..." (Ld'A: p.126). But to men disposed to compare perpetually—their persons, their wives, and most everything in their lives—this judgment, so basic to determining whether an individual finds pleasure and contentment in the life he is living, depends on the lives his fellows are living around him. "Good morals," says the philosopher, "depends more than is thought on each man's being satisfied in his estate." Where political inequalities—in esteem, power, and wealth—are vast, and especially where they do not correspond to men's talents and natural inequalities, the "disadvantaged" cannot be satisfied with their station. A vicious propensity dwelling deep in man's heart—that natural susceptibility for feeling envy and

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[11] In Plato's *Republic*, aristocracy declines toward timocracy, and timocracy toward oligarchy, largely as a result of the men attempting to please the women they desire. It is implied that whereas men might be able to overcome their longings for luxury, material comfort, and idleness where the polity honors and dishonors the proper pursuits, women cannot. (Perhaps men are more honor-loving by nature, or else, perhaps the more public character of a man's life makes honor a more powerful factor). But since men cannot be cured of their erotic longing for sex and women, what amount to erotic *necessities*, and since men will be what women want them to be, men too are necessarily connected to material pursuits where women have not been diligently educated to abhor them (if only through the women they desire). Rousseau is almost certainly right: "We do not adequately suspect the advantages that would result for society if a better education were given to that half of the human race which governs the other. Men will always be what is pleasing to women; therefore, if you want to become great and virtuous, teach women what greatness of soul are virtue are" (FD: δ45*n*). In his *Letter to d'Alembert*, Rousseau goes so far as to note that "the two sexes have so strong and so natural a relation to one another that the *mores* of the one always determine those of the other..." (Ld'A: p.81). Rousseau does assert that "all [peoples] perish from the disorder of women", but he also recognizes that the blame for any particular time's moral poverty must be shared between both sexes insofar as the polity's eminent men usually determine the form of its institutions and laws, and thus, how the polity's women are educated in the first place (Ld'A: p.109).

resentment—prevents it, and always will. Thus, "luxury cannot prevail among one order of the citizens without soon insinuating itself under various guises into all the others, and everywhere it causes the same ravages. Luxury corrupts everything; the rich who enjoy it, and the wretched who covet it" (Obs: δ51-52). The rich become soft and effeminate, and looking around, the poor become wretched as they imagine *buying* the (imaginary) repose the rich believe they enjoy. And where they cannot afford it, they turn to deception and crime to steal it, and in the process, ruin themselves. Once in a while Rousseau understates potentially disastrous situations to great rhetorical effect; to say that "everything goes badly when one aspires to the position of the other" is to put it mildly (Ld'A: p.126).[12]

On the question, "at what point should limits be placed on luxury", Rousseau, a "true philosopher", is therefore emphatic: it is not a question of limiting luxuries, "there should be none at all"; "[luxury] is itself the worst of all evils in any state whatever" (LR: δ72; SD: note *i*). Goadingly, he askes whether "luxury is diametrically opposed to good *mores*?" in the *First Discourse*, and his answer is always an unqualified "yes" (FD: δ42). But he also admits that luxury is "impossible to prevent" where men are men—animated by those *amours* derived from his primitive inclination toward self-preservation—and where men's inequalities are permitted to manifest themselves (SD: note *i*). It is precisely because genuine democracy requires that there be little or no luxury that genuine democracy "never has existed, and never will exist". In fact, in the philosopher's estimation, only "a people of Gods" could govern themselves democratically –"so perfect a Government is not suited to men" (SC: 2.4.3-8).

Sparta, Rousseau's "republic of demi-Gods", deserves such high praise in large part because riches and luxuries were so successfully limited there. Material pursuits essentially expunged from the lives of men, a truly exceptional degree of political

[12] It should be noted here that this is true only where the objects of a polity's esteem tend to corrupt those who pursue them—which is to say, it is true of most of the world's polities. In well constituted communities, however, where the public honors truly excellent attributes, aspiring to the position of the polity's most eminent men actually serves to channel the energy of citizens' *amour propre* in a very salutary way. This is more fully developed below.

equality could exist among its citizenry.[13] Rousseau and Thucydides make much of the fact that "the picture of Lacedaemon is less brilliant" than its Attic rival, the former asking whether memories of their heroism are "worth less to us than the curious statues Athens has left us" (FD: δ25). His answer to this is *almost* unqualifiedly 'no'.[14] What seems perhaps most impressive to Rousseau, however, is the specific manner by which Spartan austerity was inculcated. It is not that men were simply deprived of riches and luxuries they otherwise longed for by a powerful state, but rather, in Sparta, men's *amours* were actually tempered and transmuted such that Spartans no longer desired the luxuries that threaten most polities. "Man is one", Rousseau would later admit: everywhere, he is animated by the same longings, and so every human polity is threatened with the same dangers, at least initially. Nonetheless, Rousseau goes on to note (albeit in a somewhat different context) that, "modified by religion, governments, laws, customs, prejudices, and climates [, man] becomes so different from himself..."

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[13] More specifically, where inequalities of wealth are virtually non-existent, other political equalities (the community's honors especially) can more readily correspond to natural inequalities.

[14] This question is complicated by the fact that, as Rousseau himself admits, it is the Athenian historians who have immortalized Sparta's greatness for posterity (LR: δ43-45). Had all of Greece's peoples adhered to Sparta's ways and *mores,* however, there would not have been historians, we would know nothing of the Spartans' civic virtue and their civil freedom, but at the same time, if science, letters and arts had never developed in Greece, perhaps there would still be polities like Sparta today. Characteristically, Rousseau takes this opportunity to comment on modern man's vanity, anticipating how a number of his readers will, no doubt, respond to the idea of a world full of Spartas: "What will it have profited [me] to have been [a good man], if no one will talk about [me]?" (LR: δ46). He assures us that virtue is its own reward, even in centuries where virtuous men do not win public acclaim. At the same time, however, Rousseau emphasizes another "striking" observation.

> *The many systems of philosophy* [described by historians] *which have exhausted all the possible combinations of our ideas, and which, although they have not greatly extended the limits of our minds, have at least taught us where they are fixed: those masterpieces of eloquence and of poetry that have taught us all the ways of the heart; the useful or the agreeable arts that preserve or embellish life; the invaluable tradition of the thoughts and deeds of all the great men who have made for the glory or the happiness of their fellows: all these precious riches of the mind would have been lost forever* (LR: δ44).

Thus, the examples on which a few modern men rely (Rousseau included) in order to compare and therefore criticize their own century's ways and manners (with the aim of helping us to live more fulfilling lives by improving them), is to an important extent made possible by the actions of peoples who "knew how to speak well" (though they did not always act well), and their

(Ld'A: p.17). While Rousseau means to highlight the fact that different types of art are necessarily suitable for and useful to peoples made radically different by a variety different factors, implicit to this realization is the recognition that if human beings can be modified by the constellation of influences we generally call a "culture", then it is a people's culture that makes its members better or worse men and women.

Spartans became better; they became more than men, in fact, "so superior did their virtues seem to human nature" (FD: δ24). Given their semi-divine stature in Rousseau's eyes, it is hardly surprising that with regard to all its ways, and especially the education that made its youths into real men, Rousseau's praise of Sparta is unstinting. In fact, the beautified Geneva he thanks at the beginning of the *Second Discourse*, and the reforms he proposes for her at the end of his *Letter to d'Alembert*, are unmistakably Spartan. He endeavors to make a new sort of Genevan—a better man in the image of a demi-god—out of his countrymen. Accomplishing as much (a truly monumental task to be sure), requires the complete subjugation of the all-too-human longings and desires that make ordinary men so ordinary, however. In the place of individualistic *amours*,

> [e]ach must feel that he could not find elsewhere what he left in his country; an invincible charm must recall him to the seat he ought never to have quitted; the memory of their first exercises; their first entertainments, their first pleasures, must remain profoundly engraved in their hearts... Thus did that Sparta, which I shall have never cited enough as the example that we ought to follow, recall its citizens by modest festivals and games without pomp; thus in Athens, in the midst of the fine arts, thus in Susa, in the lap of luxury and softness, the bored Spartan longed for his coarse feasts and his fatiguing exercise (Ld'A: p.133).

An adequate understanding of Rousseau's critique of the sciences and the arts—in large, that they make the establishment of the austere and elevating *mores* which characterize polities like Sparta impossible, and even that they can slowly erode wholesome ways and manners where they have already been established—requires a brief examination of the factors that made Sparta so exceptional.

As Rousseau demonstrates, only an ardent patriotism, an ardent love of the fatherland and fellow citizen, passions that, once inculcated, are strong enough to

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depiction of that people who knew how "to act well" (FD: δ62). This theme will be expanded

(*almost*) permanently direct and suppress a man's natural *amours*, only such absolute identification with one's polity can sustain a regime devoted to citizenship and civic virtue. This man enjoys an enviable inner tranquility because he is not in contradiction with himself; his naturally selfish and potentially pernicious inclinations (and all his energies by which to pursue them), are either stifled, or they are redirected toward benefiting his community. He is cured of his desires for commodities and undeserved esteem, and thus, he does not imagine gaining them illegitimately. He is a man who no longer identifies primarily with his individuality; instead, his own pleasures, successes, and prosperity are happily subordinated to his position in the larger group, a position from which he derives his most intense satisfactions. In *Emile*, Rousseau speaks approvingly of the Spartan who, defeated in his campaign to serve on the council of three hundred, "goes home delighted that there were three hundred men worthier than he to be found in Sparta... This is the citizen" (Emile: p.40). He is a citizen in every sense of the word because he identifies his own good with the common good—in fact, he makes no distinction between "common good" and "particular good"; the common good is his particular good. The result: men and women who might well prefer the simplicity of traditional festivals to Athenian splendor and brilliance; men and women who will long for the coarse feasts their mothers prepared, and the fatiguing exercises their fathers directed, even when presented with the luxury and idleness they are apt to find abroad. In the *Social Contract*, in the chapter on censorship, Rousseau makes an important observation; "among all peoples of the world, not nature but opinion determines the choice of their pleasures" (SC: 4.7.3).

But how to inculcate opinions that will make men godlike in the choice of their pleasures? To realize such a rare and noble feat, the polity's citizens must have the appropriate opinions about what is honorable and just, must believe in the paramount importance of patriotism and civic duty, and their ways and manners, entertainments and festivals must reflect and reinforce these opinions and beliefs, such that everyone wholeheartedly subscribes to the polity's distinctive culture. Only where these conditions are met will a people's culture elevate a citizenry, effectively making them who they are. Engendering such public-spiritedness requires carefully crafted laws and a political

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upon in *Part Two* and *Part Three*.

education meticulously perfected and then vigilantly guarded, however. Beyond that, the polity's laws and its educational curriculum are most effectively adhered to (and protected) once they have the force of antiquity to recommend them. That a polity's founding become "in a way lost in the darkness of time", (which minimizes challenges to the polity's often-dubious founding principles by obscuring the circumstances surrounding the polity's origin), is not easily brought about for a number of obvious reasons. What is certain, is that in order to make citizens out of ordinary men, extraordinary men must be at the helm of the polity, especially in the beginning. Thus, as Rousseau concedes, "it would require gods to give men laws".

In the *Social Contract*, also ostensibly written for Geneva, Rousseau emphasizes the importance of an almost-divine Lawgiver who, at a people's founding "saw all of man's passions and experienced none of them, who had no relation to our nature yet knew it thoroughly, whose happiness was independent of us and who was nevertheless willing to care for ours; finally, one who, preparing his distant glory in the progress of times, could work in one century and enjoy the reward in another" (SC 2.7.1). For the almost impossible task of, so to speak, "changing human nature", of "weakening man's constitution in order to strengthen it", of replacing our natural *amours* with a moral commitment to the community, or as Rousseau puts it—"of substituting a partial and moral existence for the independent and physical existence we have all received from nature"—all of this must be accomplished in order to establish a polity like Sparta. And only in such a polity will men become "as free as before", that is, as free as men were in Rousseau's state of nature (SC: 2.7.3). In short, the polity's political education must effectively enervate man's natural forces and inclinations such that they can be replaced with forces and inclinations which are initially alien to him: those of a citizen who is entirely dependent on his community. Man must effectively be *transformed* into a citizen, such that, psychologically, he regards himself as nothing without his community. *Persuading* men to (willingly) renounce their natural rights—persuading them to *overcome* their natural *amours*, as it were—is the essential requisite when it comes to founding a Sparta or a Rome. Rousseau goes on to note that "the more these natural forces are dead and destroyed, the greater and more lasting are the acquired ones"—in effect, they become (and must become) second nature (SC: 2.7). Only where this is

accomplished will a true citizenry emerge—men willing, even eager, to subordinate their particular will to an enlightened General Will.[15] In short, Sparta was Sparta because "Lycurgas denatured [the heart of man]" (Emile: p.40).

But how, precisely, taking men as they are, might such a radical change of disposition ever be achieved? How are men, their loves, and the objects of their desires transformed once and for all... how can they be *persuaded* to ignore their natural inclinations in favor of more or less artificial ones? Rousseau's answer might be that men are not taught to ignore both their *amours*, but that one is used against the other, to contain the other. The philosopher calls man's second innate desire[16], his *amour propre* that fuels his perpetual lust for men's esteem, "universal". It "devours us all"; it "stimulates and multiplies passions" (SD: 2.52). But in a particularly memorable passage, Rousseau admits that along with a vast multitude of "bad things" and vices, we owe also the best of what mankind has accomplished to "this ardor to be talked about, to this furor to distinguish oneself" (SD: 2.52). To prevent man's natural lust for riches and luxury from consuming him—what Rousseau had called "the worst of all evils in any state whatever"—this desire for men's esteem must be employed against man's natural

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[15] It should be noted here that "a people can free itself as long as it is merely barbarous." According to Rousseau, "a thousand nations on earth have been brilliant which could never have tolerated good laws... Peoples, like men, are docile only in their youth, with age they grow incorrigible; once customs are established and prejudices rooted, it is a dangerous and futile undertaking to try to reform them" (SC: 2.8.2-4). In contrast to Sparta, the philosopher often calls Athens brilliant. The implication seems to be that as a people grows old, learning and the uses men put it to advances haphazardly. The result—that *mores* degenerate at the same time—is all the more tragic insofar as once degenerate ways and customs are established, a people can no longer tolerate the laws and customs that might have made them virtuous, free, happy and good. It is as opposed to the natural order of things as would be an individual growing younger as time passes. Further implications of this important Rousseauean principle are discussed in Part Two with respect to the semi-barbarous Poles.

[16] It should be noted here that man's *amour propre* can only be considered innate if man is, by nature, a social animal. In the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, Rousseau admits that "in the first times men scattered over the face of the earth had no society other than the family" (EOL: 9.1). If this is true, and there is ample reason to conclude that it is, then it would seem to dispute and supercede Rousseau's claims in *Part One* of the *Second Discourse* (which nonetheless serve and important philosophic purpose, as we have seen). For the development of language and the survival of the species in spite of man's long period of vulnerability while still a child, cannot be explained in any other way. The notion that men only begin to "make comparisons" and "acquire ideas of merit and beauty which produce sentiments of preference" after the mysterious "first revolution" that occurs near the beginning of *Part Two* and which "produced the establishment

desire for material comforts and earthly commodities. But to accomplish this, Rousseau's *first requirement*, as it were—the first characteristic of the polity he would have chosen had he had the opportunity no human has ever had: to choose his own birthplace—is that the political community be small, its "size limited by the extent of human faculties", something Rousseau treats as the prerequisite of the very "possibility of being well-governed" (SD: ded. δ2).

In short, living in a small city promotes wholesome *mores* insofar as men and women cannot hope to evade public judgment. It is precisely because the yearning for honor and the complementary fear of ignominy is so powerful that Rousseau's judgment of big cities could hardly be more scathing. On account of the ease with which inhabitants can hide their conduct from each other's judgment, 'inhumanly' large and complex cities are "full of scheming, idle people without religion or principle, whose imagination, depraved by sloth, inactivity, the love of pleasure, and great needs [thus] engender only monsters and inspire only crimes..." (Ld'A: p.58) In smaller political communities like Geneva and Sparta, on the other hand, where "individuals are always in the public eye", Rousseau notes that men and women are "born censors" of one another (Ld'A: p.59). He argues in the *Social Contract*, in the chapter *Of Censorship*, that it "is useless to draw a distinction between a nation's morals and the objects of its esteem", that "not nature but opinion determines the choice of [a people's] pleasures", that by reforming a people's opinions, "their morals will be purified themselves" (SC: 4.7.3). In short, he echoes here what he claims to "have treated at greater length" in his *Letter to d'Alembert*—that opinion is "queen of the world", and that *mores* can be maintained by "preventing opinions from becoming corrupt", that "censorship can be useful in preserving morals, never in restoring them" (Ld'A: p.73; SC: 4.7.5-6, 7*n*). Thus, in a small, well-founded republic like Sparta, man's *amour propre*, even his vanity, which is to say, his concern for his reputation as determined by his peers (who evaluate his conduct against the community's opinions), is the force that, in effect, defends wholesome *mores*. Put simply, where men cannot hope to escape public judgment, their love of honor and aversion to dishonor are indispensable supports for virtue.

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and differentiation of families" for the first time, seems to be emended in Rousseau's later essay (SD: 2.6, 2.16-17; cf. EOL: 9.1-4).

That a polity be small, however, is not, on its own, a sufficient check to what makes riches and luxury—*buying* imaginary repose—so appealing to most men. What the polity actually honors and dishonors—its particular conceptions of noble and base—must also be considered carefully. On this matter, it may be that what Rousseau's two favorite republics have in common is vitally important to his high praise. Rome and Sparta were both martial societies. Men's courage, their strength, their fortitude, their very hardness—these warlike qualities, cultivated most effectively in men born for war—are at bottom, the qualities which sustained the regimes. In fact, a polity's underlying principle cannot but determine the character of a regime—its entertainments, its games, its ways, its opinions, and especially the objects of its esteem—all reflective of what it considers to be noble and base, honorable and shameful. Where that ruling principle is victory in war, children are "rustically raised", they revere their fathers, grandfathers, and elders (men who are experienced in life as in war), while among themselves, they are "hardy, proud and quarrelsome". In contrast to modern men and modern children, Rousseau laments a time now passed, a time when "men were coarser": "they had no hairdo to preserve; they challenged one another at wrestling, running, and boxing. They fought in good earnest, hurt one another sometimes, and then embraced in their tears"—all this in contrast to the "fine little spruced-up gentlemen" Paris had established as the model, and which Geneva was beginning to rear in their image as Rousseau was writing (Ld'A: p.112). For where the objects of a polity's esteem shift from warlike qualities to commercial ones, public esteem no longer enlists man's *amour propre* and his vanity in the service of promoting virtue.

The emphasis Rousseau places on the importance of a gymnastic education and a rearing for war is so ubiquitous in his writings, especially in his *First Discourse*, because a martial upbringing naturally helps to counteract men's bestial preference for comfort and ease. Indeed, only where "strength and vigor of the soul", "true courage", and "military virtue" are wholeheartedly encouraged by the regime's honors, and thus, only where "'...a sight that could never be produced by [Europe's] wealth or all [its] arts, the most noble sight that has ever appeared beneath the heavens, the assembly of two hundred virtuous men, worthy of commanding Rome and governing the Earth'" might actually be realized, can man's natural longing for comforts, riches, idleness, and luxury

be effectively stifled (FD: δ11, δ34, δ48). Only where the polity's principle is utterly at odds with material gain—which may be to say, *only* where a polity's principle is war—can the objects of a polity's esteem promote unwavering patriotism and civic virtue to the detriment of those concerns (such as riches and luxury) which *always* threaten to subordinate the public good to individual desires and private machinations.[17] As a result, it is only in a polity thus constituted that the force of opinion, Rousseau's fourth, "most important of all" sort of law, can successfully constrain men's *amour de soi* by channeling their *amour propre*. For in Sparta as in Rome, once "graven not in marble or bronze, but in the hearts of citizens", the polity's customs, its ways and its manners, and especially the objects of its esteem, effectively determined the people's pleasures; true Spartans are Spartans and Romans Romans because no matter where they are, they long for *their* wholesome pleasures (SC: 2.12.5). In his preface to *Narcissus*, Rousseau is explicit: "customs are the morality of the people; and as soon as the people ceases to respect them, it is left with no rule but its passions, and no curb but the laws, which can sometimes keep the wicked in check, but can never make them good" (PN δ34).

To accomplish this perfect union of what Rousseau would eventually call (enlightened) General Will and particular will, to sustain a republic so perfectly constituted, a number of supports are indispensable. Of these, a "civil religion" is almost certainly the most important. To begin with, instituting the laws and customs that, once established as 'tradition', will promote the *mores* which will generate and sustain this sort of public spirit, requires that the Lawgiver invoke a deity. For faced with men disposed to pursue their particular interests first, the Lawgiver must invoke a force capable of inspiring utter awe in naturally self-interested men, something only a superhuman authority can effectively accomplish. As Rousseau notes, since the Lawgiver "can use neither force nor reasoning, he must of necessity have recourse to an authority of a different order, which might be able to rally without violence and to persuade without convincing" (SC: 2.7.9). For the same reasons, in the *Second Discourse* Rousseau emphasizes that "human governments" need a basis "more solid than reason alone"; that for the sake of public repose, it is necessary that "divine will intervened to give sovereign

[17] It is true that a martial rearing promotes military success, and that military success can promote the acquisition of riches, luxuries, and an increase in leisure among a decisive portion of the

authority a sacred and inviolable character which took from the subjects the fatal right of disposing of it" (SD: 2.46).[18]

In the chapter entitled *The Civil Religion* we do learn that "everyone may hold whatever opinions he pleases, without its being up to the sovereign to know them" unless the opinions in question bear on morality or on duties (SC: 4.8.31). The readers Rousseau cares about are surely meant to realize this includes most of what is important. Hobbes is right: "the actions of men proceed from their opinions, and in the well governing of opinions consisteth the well governing of men's actions" (Lev: 2.18.9). For if opinion is the pilot of a polity's passion, and as such, what sustains a well-constituted state, most of what a people believes is of particular importance to the state and its governors. And since religious conviction bears directly and powerfully on a citizen's conception of his 'duties' and his 'morality', the reigning religion's dogmas and deities are of tremendous political importance. These are, after all, the opinions that persuaded the self-interested public initially to accept laws where reason and force would have failed; moreover, these are the opinions that determine how a polity's citizens stand toward the state, toward death, and perhaps most importantly, how they stand toward life. Sparta was renowned for "its happy ignorance" according to the philosopher. Not the dissemination of knowledge, then, but popular "ignorance" or shared *opinion*, was essential to "the wisdom of [Sparta's] laws" (FD: δ24). What men believe ultimately determines whether they will remain ordinary men—driven by base desire and petty passion—or whether they can be made into better men, into citizens.

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polity's members. Implications of this propensity are discussed in *Part Two*.

[18] Forming a Sparta could not be accomplished otherwise insofar as it takes time for a polity's customs and traditions to become lost in the fog of antiquity and acquire the near-mystical foundations he deems so essential. In order to accomplish this, public repose, or at least the absence of a challenge to the regime's foundations are essential until powerful traditions are firmly entrenched (and perhaps even long afterward); "this is what has at all times forced the fathers of nations to resort to the intervention of heaven and to honor the Gods with their wisdom, so that peoples... freely obey the yoke of public felicity and bear it with docility" (SC: 2.7.10). This is necessarily the case because on Rousseau's view, Republicanism requires a passionate commitment from the polity's members. Since generating public spirit requires that men be *persuaded* by a passionate affinity for the state, their fellows, and their distinctive ways and manners (something fear can never accomplish), and since, as Rousseau insists to M. d'Alembert, force has "no power over minds", Rousseau's solution—channeling men's passions such that defending the state and its prosperity are their overriding objects because patriotism constitutes the highest glory—is necessarily preferable to Hobbes' solution (Ld'A: p.67).

The sort of religion that best suits a state from this perspective, is Rousseau's second and central of the three types he discusses, what he calls 'Religion of the Citizen'. It is a set of principles that "inscribed in a single country, gives it its gods, its own titular patrons: it has its dogmas, its rites, its external cult prescribed by laws: it regards everything outside the single nation which adheres to it as infidel, alien, barbarous; it extends the rights and duties of man only as far as its *altars*…" (SC: 4.8.15). Religion of the citizen teaches the people to revere the fatherland and to serve it; patriotism and passionate commitment to the community—public spirit—is the result. Citizens, perhaps even the sort of men (and women) that made up Republican Rome and Sparta are the result if the founder is the sort of philosophic man animated by the "great soul" Rousseau imagines. That a successful founding amounts to a "true miracle"—an almost impossible feat with the effect of making gods, or at least demi-gods, out of men—may not be an overstatement after all.

In a few short lines, Strauss cogently summarizes what Rousseau stresses here, and states plainly what Rousseau had attempted to conceal once he had disabused himself of an "erroneous opinion" he had held "for a long time" (Ld'A: p.97*n*) It should be clear by now that "society can be healthy *only* if the opinions and sentiments engendered by society overcome and, as it were, *annihilate* the natural sentiments" (My emphasis; NRH: p.287). What is more, though, Strauss makes explicit what Rousseau simply could not state plainly to enlightened men—at least, not if he hoped his audience might take seriously his suggestions for reform in Geneva, Poland, and Corsica.[19] Thus, what is only subtly implied by Rousseau near the end of his *Social Contract*—that no healthy state has ever been founded without religion—has truly radical implications (SC: 4.8.14). In Strauss' words, "*only* the civil religion will engender the sentiments required of the citizen" (My emphasis; NRH: p.288-89). If Strauss is right, this matter is one of tremendous political import as a result of popular enlightenment and its effect on ordinary men with respect to their propensity to fear invisible spirits. Finally, the

[19] In a note to his *Letter to d'Alembert*, the erroneous opinion of which Rousseau claims he has recently disabused himself is the supposition that "one can be virtuous without religion" (Ld'A: p.97). Whether or not Rousseau ever actually believed ordinary men could be virtuous without this most important support, the effect of enlightening a polity's citizens should be clear to the readers Rousseau cares about even if he does not explicitly state it.

importance Strauss attributes to each polity's having a distinctive "national individuality" insofar as "national custom or national cohesion is a deeper root of civil society than are calculation and self-interest..." is another matter of profound significance to modern Europeans (NHR: p.288-89). For Rousseau and Strauss force the reader to confront a possibility contrary to, and quite uncomfortable for, modern sensibilities. Might the cultivation of a "national individuality" require a martial rearing, even that the polity be devoted to war; might genuine love of country require a hardness that can only be inculcated alongside a hatred of outsiders? Rousseau tacitly connects the two early in the *First Discourse*; he warns that as a result of the development of the sciences and the arts, "National hatreds will die out, but so will love of country", that by fostering science—in principle cosmopolitan and thus, in principle hostile to national hatreds and national individualities—the very foundation for love of country will also be undermined (FD: δ14). If it is the case that true patriotism and public spirit requires that a polity have enemies—that it refer to them as such, and that it not shrink from confronting them—circumstance may well have erected another important barrier to a Geneva or a Poland becoming a Sparta or a Rome. But this is to take up matters that are more profitably discussed with reference to Rousseau's thoughts on Poland. Having considered a number of the difficult requirements history's most exceptional polities successfully overcame, the dangers posed by the sciences and the arts as they develop within them and around them remain to be considered.

As Rousseau shows in his *Second Discourse*, where metallurgy and agriculture were finally practiced together, tribes became larger communities, and larger communities eventually became polities as knowledge increased and arts multiplied. But as he had also shown, men like Lycurgus were absolutely essential at the founding of such polities in order to prevent political decay. Like miracles, however, Lawgivers of "superior intelligence" are exceedingly rare; "if it is true that a great Prince is a rare man" (and Rousseau emphatically asserts that he is), then his next question, "what of a great Lawgiver?", is surely intended to highlight Sparta's exceptionalism (SC: 2.7.3). Somewhat ironically, then, the rarity of a Sparta is connected to insufficient learning. Most everywhere,

> [t]he lack of philosophy and experience allowed only present inconveniences to be perceived, and men thought of remedying others only as they presented themselves. Despite all the labors of the wisest legislators, the political state remained ever imperfect because it was almost the work of chance, and because, as it began badly, time in discovering faults and suggesting remedies could never repair the vices of the constitution. People incessantly mended, whereas it would have been necessary to begin by clearing the area and setting aside all the old materials, as Lycurgus did in Sparta, in order to raise a good edifice afterward (SD: 2.36)

Sparta and Rome, therefore, must be seen as uncommon exceptions. Ordinarily, as polities arose, the arts and sciences, driven only by men's baser passions, developed without impediment and entirely haphazardly. Early polities, more complex than a tribe, and now geographically fixed, did provide for the security and material well-being of their inhabitants. But where men live secure, sedentary, and increasingly idle lives, the daily trials that forced their ancestors to remain strong, vigorous, self-sufficient, and free eventually vanish. As Rousseau demonstrates in the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, men (unwittingly) turn their attention toward pursuing what ultimately turns out to be most debilitating. Technical expertise is acquired, but it is not directed by "true philosophy"; instead, men's passions determine what knowledge is pursued, and in turn, how it is employed. The result: sciences and arts envisioned and practiced to make life easy and pleasant, what in general amounts to the opposite of making life good. As Rousseau notes,

> [w]hile government and laws provide for the safety and well-being of assembled men, the sciences, letters, and arts, less despotic and perhaps more powerful, spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains with which men are burdened, stifle in them the sense of original liberty for which they seemed to have been born, make them love their slavery, and turned them into what is called civilized peoples (FD: δ9).

It may be that "need raised thrones" insofar as a state's neighbors—their size, their character, and their political ambitions—make larger populations and vaster territories necessary for the sake of common defense (especially in modern times). But as Rousseau notes, it is "the sciences and arts [that] have strengthened [thrones]": by promising leisure and pleasant ways to spend it, men have learned to love their chains (FD: δ9).

New arts provide new luxuries, new luxuries quickly become new needs, nothing inhibits man's imagination, but he devotes it to imagining new luxuries. In a word, increasingly ruled by his particular will and thereby seduced by the prospect of more and new luxuries, man *becomes* increasingly individualistic. Polities grow larger as their complexity increases to satisfy the always-expanding desires of the rich, and so the role that public recognition can play to encourage virtue and restrain men's selfishness necessarily diminishes as small cities enlarge, unite, or are swallowed, all to become big ones. Where men can hide from public judgment of their characters, they do. And just as Socrates' timocratic man in *Republic* hid his wealth (even as his treasure house filled with gold) to avoid public ignominy while enjoying "shameful" pleasures in private, so do men of all degenerate times play one role in public while they enjoy their true pleasures in private—at least until they can indulge their secret lusts publicly and without dishonor. Socrates' indictment would seem to apply: "Instead of men who love victory and honor, they finally become lovers of money-making and money; and they praise and admire the wealthy man and bring him to the ruling offices, while they dishonor the poor man" (Rep: 551e). Where public honor had once moved man's *amour propre* to restrain his *amour de soi* and longing for gain, now the former serves to augment the latter. And where martial virtue is no longer honored (with its depreciation of material accumulation) nothing remains to check man's basest inclinations.

A potentially debilitating conflict is born, then strengthened by the lust for luxuries and the growing disparities of wealth made possible by the sciences and the arts. The problem is identified early in the *Social Contract*, and its resolution, what Sparta achieved, is an important focus in many of Rousseau's works. In Sparta, the spirit of the regime, its *mores*, its laws, and its reigning opinions, "intimately united in the hearts of the citizens, made, as it were, only one single body" (Ld'A: p.67). Everyday experience, by revealing what must be overcome, underlines just how difficult accomplishing such a union of souls can be;

> every individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to or different from the general will he has as a Citizen. His particular interest may speak to him quite differently from the common interest; his absolute and naturally independent existence may lead him to look upon what he owes to the common cause a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which will harm others less than its

> payment burdens him and, by considering the moral person that constitutes the State as a being of reason because it is not a man, he would enjoy the rights of a citizen without being willing to fulfill the duties of a subject; an injustice, the progress of which would cause the ruin of the body politic (SC: 1.7.7).

Common sense confirms that the more luxurious a city, where there is more to tempt citizens' particular wills, the objects of its desires multiply and their intensity increases. But where the 'relishes' which desire are for the most part un-shareable, the gulf between General Will and particular will increases accordingly. It is probably worth repeating that Sparta's success, largely attributable to the reconciliation of particular will and General Will (which is to say, the collection of particular wills—the Will of All—corresponded to the General Will almost perfectly), was achievable there because there was nothing to buy, hence no reason to get rich, and so little to seduce a man's particular will.

In the *First Discourse*, Rousseau asks "what will become of virtue when one must get rich at any price?" (FD: δ42). His answer pervades his writings and it follows Socrates' warning. In *Republic*'s Book Eight, Glaucon learns that the existence of treasure houses threatened to "destroy[] the regime" closest to the their *city in logos*, a regime dedicated to victory in war, and characterized by its citizens' love of honor (Rep: 550d). With Rousseau, who believed riches were both the worst of evils and an inevitable evil, Socrates asserts that virtue is in tension with wealth "as though each were lying in the scale of a balance, always inclining in opposite directions", and that "when wealth and the wealthy are honored in a city, virtue and the good men are less honorable" (Rep: 550ea).

Rousseau is almost certainly right: "Among us, it is true, Socrates would not have drunk the hemlock; but he would have drunk from an even more bitter cup" (FD: δ34). Modernity is depraved, especially in comparison to the lofty examples provided by antiquity. Whereas "ancient politicians incessantly talked about *mores* and virtue; those of our time talk only of business and money." Thus, the ancients were strong, courageous, free; Rome was worthy of conquering the world and "making virtue reign in it" (FD: δ33). The moderns, on the contrary, have money and honor wealth, but "with money one has everything, except morals and citizens" (FD: δ43). Rousseau continues:

"while living conveniences multiply, arts are perfected and luxury spreads, true courage is enervated, military virtues disappear"; men become soft and effeminate as they neglect gymnastic education and their military responsibilities to pursue material comforts, to "*buy* imaginary repose" (FD: δ48). And to what lengths modern men are willing to go! Where profit means material gain, a man gains at the expense of his fellows: heirs hope for the death of their father, merchants and sailors for the wreck of other vessels, neighbors for disasters that will devastate their fellows, and the multitude for public calamity (SD: note *i*). It is not hard to see that criminality rises out of men's *amour de soi* wherever a martial rearing, and the opinions it inculcates, does not act against it. For where public-spiritedness no longer buttresses the laws, contempt for the laws, one's fellows, and the polity is inevitable. Licentiousness and lawlessness in the cities cannot be far behind. Rousseau's words here are understandably poignant ones: "all are slaves to vice. Uncommitted crimes dwell deep inside men's hearts" (PN: δ29). Arrived at this point, it is difficult to imagine any alternative to Hobbes' solution: rule by Leviathan through fear and force.

The detrimental consequences of riches and luxury go far beyond softening soldiers, and making men vicious in their pursuit of luxuries and commodities, however; "it sells out the fatherland to laxity, to vanity; it deprives the State of all its Citizens by making them slaves to one another, and all of them slaves to opinion" (SC: 3.4.5). The martial rearing of olden times and the public-spiritedness that had helped to sustain it finally enervated, the objects of public approbation shift, and only the baser of qualities and accomplishments are esteemed; men and women begin to admire only the low things they long for in private. Of the several kinds inequality—wealth, nobility (or status), power, and wealth—eventually the least of common desires gain the highest honors; "wealth is the last to which they are reduced in the end because, being the most immediately useful to well-being... it is easily used to buy the rest" (SD: 2.52). Thus, wealth comes to be desired not only for the pleasure and luxury it promises, but also for the honor and esteem garnered by being rich. Whereas once upon a time one of men's *amours* had once checked the other, in modern times, they conspire to make men contemptible. For in large and complex societies, in societies made up of everything from farmers and soldiers, to pastry-chefs and tanning salon operators, comparisons

become difficult, as all can claim some distinction. And so it becomes increasingly difficult to establish hierarchies (what standard of excellence does one use—the soldier's or the pastry-chef's?). Because riches are so readily countable and comparable a man's wealth becomes the primary measure of his worth, and the most important factor in the determination of who enjoys public esteem. "What a strange and ruinous constitution," the philosopher observes, "...where the basest are the most honored" (PN: δ30).

Ruinous may well be an understatement. In the modern world, men devote their energies to acquiring wealth and luxuries beyond what they could enjoy had they ten lives to live, and they will as long as we honor those who conspicuously consume the most. The vilest of ostentation finds its home in Hobbesian regimes, and therefore, so does the basest criminality. It could be said that modern men do "everything to obtain [other's esteem], if [they] did not do even more to deprive [their] competitors of it." *Amour propre* moves the best of ordinary men, but always in the wrong direction once the polity's conception of noble and base (and its respective honors) have been corrupted by treasure houses and what gold can buy. Vanity remains a furious passion, but in degenerate men, it only leads to "vile and obsequious flattery, seductive, insidious, childish attentions which in time diminish the souls and corrupt the heart... sly slander, deceit, treachery, and all the most cowardly and odious aspects of vice" (PN: δ26).

Indeed, noble attributes are no longer honored, and so conventions—contrived conceptions of "proper behavior"—take their place. Where one dines, how one acts, what one says, when and to whom he says it—modern society has a *rule* to govern our behavior on almost every occasion. Virtually everyone is capable of following these rules of politesse, of course, for they require neither strength, nor courage, nor virtue of any sort. As Rousseau puts it, once upon a time, "differences of conduct announced at first glance those of character". Not in his day (nor in ours), however; instead, "when subtler researches and a more refined taste have reduced the art of pleasing to set rules, a base and deceptive uniformity prevails in our customs." The result: "one no longer dares to appear what he is... all do the same things unless stronger motives deter him" (FD: δ12-14). Alternately stated, almost all men are polite, but very few are genuine or good. In fact, the polity's social conventions come to provide cover for the uncommitted crimes

dwelling deep in men's hearts. "Therefore one will never know well those with whom he deals... until it is too late."

This begins Rousseau's critique of modernity, and the real cost to the communities and the men who live in them could hardly be greater. Where men have much to gain from obstructing, supplanting, deceiving, betraying, and destroying one another, it is no surprise that they do so eagerly, especially where society makes it easy. Honesty—with oneself and with one's fellows—is replaced by deception and duplicity. "One no longer dares to appear as he is," and as Rousseau notes, "What a procession of vices must accompany this uncertainty! No more sincere friendships; no more real esteem; no more well-based confidence" (FD: δ14).

As a man of unusual strength (for his decadent and degenerate century) puts it in Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, "We no longer have genuine passions in the nineteenth century... We do the most incredibly cruel things, but without cruelty" (Stendhal: p.281). The cost of always acting, always hiding outside of ourselves, is that very few today have honest and genuine relationships of any sort. In the second half of the novel, Mademoiselle de la Mole, Paris' most *cèlebre* high-society noblewoman is bored and decides to court a young man of ordinary birth because his scholarly, and sometimes warlike, temperament makes him more exciting than those who would make her a duchesse. Of her shrewd machinations devised to win young Julien, the author remarks, "never were such tender words spoken more coldly and politely." It is Julien, of noble spirit but deeply misguided by his century and its bourgeois honors, who remarks to himself: "These lovely Parisian manners have acquired the secret of spoiling almost everything, even love" (Stendahl: p.328-329). In the end, they ruin him altogether. Can it be that the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts have annihilated everything that makes men happy, everything that makes their lives good... even those "sweetest sentiments known to man: conjugal love and paternal love"? (SD: 2.13). Stendhal's book forces the reader to *feel* Julien's torment, just as the reader shares in the protagonist's happiness and his misery. His predicament is a disquieting one, one many have faced in recent centuries, and which Rousseau lamented. Julien is forced to decide how to spend his final days, but it is symbolic of a choice many modern men ultimately face (whether or not they face it consciously): to "love" a woman who is infatuated with Voltaire and

enjoys having her entrance into Parisian drawing rooms announced with great pomp and ceremony, or to love Madame de Rênal, a countrywoman, a mother, and a much simpler soul.[20]

[20] Admittedly, Julien's situation is complicated, perhaps gravely, by the fact that he is not an ordinary man. Indeed, Stendhal actually assures the reader that he has a philosophic nature. It is, therefore, at least possible that the choice Julien makes without any hesitation is the wrong one for a man of his talents. Nonetheless, Stendhal's essential point—that for most men, Madame de Rênal is the better woman—is made quite beautifully (and incredibly persuasively). In this connection, consider what Rousseau writes to M. d'Alembert.

> If I add that there are no good mores for women outside of a withdrawn and domestic life; if I say that the peaceful care of family and the home are their lot, that the dignity of their sex consists in modesty, that shame and chasteness are inseparable from decency for them, that when they seek for men's looks they are already letting themselves be corrupted by them, and that any woman who shows herself off disgraces herself; I will be immediately attacked by this philosophy of a day which is born and dies in the corner of a big city and wishes to smother the cry of nature and the unanimous voice of humankind... 'Why,' they ask, 'should what is not shameful for a man be so for a woman?' ... As if the consequences were the same on both sides! As if the austère duties of the woman were not derived from the single fact that a child ought to have a father... Nature wanted it so, and it would be a crime to stifle its voice... (Ld'A: p.82-5).

From Luxury to Arts, and from Idleness to Science

Once upon a time, men had been content to "apply themselves only to tasks that a single person could do", and for a long time, "they lived free, healthy, good, and happy insofar as they could be according to their nature" (SD: 2.20). Content with their rustic huts, or else, in a few rare cases, content in soldiers' barracks because they knew nothing else, men may have enjoyed some leisure, but it was always enjoyed quietly, within the community, and without pomp or ostentation. Perhaps it was so because there were no alternatives before the explosion of sciences and technical arts, but in any event, adornments and entertainments remained simple so long as the lives of men and women remained simple. But after that "great revolution" Rousseau makes so much of, society's increased complexity permitted more than riches and material luxury. If idleness and leisure were not precisely new—and at times, Rousseau claims he does "not understand this distinction between idleness and leisure"—modern man certainly found new uses for his spare time. According to Rousseau, however, since "no honest man can ever boast of leisure as long as good remains to be done," in the age of big cities that never sleep, men, almost singularly, put their idle moments to misuse.

"From luxury arose the Fine Arts," Rousseau contends (Obs: δ51). It is worth recalling here, that there are "only three instruments with which the *mores* of a people can be acted upon: the force of the laws, the empire of opinion, and the appeal of pleasure" (Ld'A: p.22). When it comes to the uses ordinary men make of their luxury and idleness—which is to say, why they support the Fine Arts—the appeal of pleasure is, once again, the motivating cause. It is a force that acts upon *mores*, and where *mores* are good, it tends to act contrary to the very "empire of opinion" which had made them good.

Art moulds manners. In contrast to the martial rearing of antiquity, and what Rousseau remembers of his own Genevan rearing—rustic educations, undertaken in the fields and designed to make children "hardy", "proud", and "quarrelsome"—in the *First Discourse*, he laments the intrusion of Parisian pleasures—"our gardens are adorned with statues and our galleries with paintings" (FD: δ53). In fact, speaking on what "is surely a noble question", children's education, Rousseau is emphatic: "children must be kept busy... for them, idleness is the danger most to be feared" (FD: δ52). For where parents and their children are not kept busy in the fields, at church, or preparing traditional

festivals, life's simple pleasures—repose at the end of a hard day's work, games with the neighbors, conjugal and paternal love enjoyed at home—are no longer quite as enjoyable. Opinions largely determine a people's pleasures, but opinions change, especially where luxury and the Fine Arts exert their influence. This may be *the* problem posed by Fine Arts because once they intrude into the lives and the rearing of boys and girls, forming Parisian gentlemen and elegant ladies increasingly becomes the aim; soft, effeminate, cowardly men, the result. The ways responsible for making men strong and courageous are quietly enervated from the moment that "simplicity of olden times" is forgotten; not long afterward, it becomes a term of derision as the complex ways of the big city become fashionable.

Art can be so damaging because of what it appeals to. Its appeal is that it permits men and women to escape from daily routines that, in comparison to the lives and times so often portrayed with great excitement and all splendor, come to be seen as mundane in comparison. Thus, where what we call fine art is established (or reestablished), it is longed for even as it threatens to replace the community's customary ways and manners. And since pleasure largely determines a people's choice of art, what they call "masterpieces of art", and so exhibit "for public admiration" present the young with anything but the portraits of excellent men—exemplars of martial virtue and defenders of the fatherland, but also, models of sobriety, moderation, and self-control—they need so badly to see depicted beautifully. In Rousseau's day, as in ours, publicly sanctioned art no longer attempts to establish elevating models which might help to inculcate qualities that once made men good and even great... "No. They are pictures of all the aberrations of the heart..." (FD: δ53). And wherever children are presented with "models of bad actions" from a very early age, it should not come as a surprise when they begin to emulate them. They learn everything but their duties, they learn to muse about God instead of awe for Him, and they learn to long for leisure such that they can enjoy foreign pleasures.

For if a polity allows for the presentation of an alternative to the simple amusements, taxing responsibilities, and rustic ways that once formed healthy and handsome men, "their labors will cease to be their amusements and... as soon as they have a new amusement, it will undermine their taste for the old ones" (Ld'A: p.62). The

simply, hardy life of a Spartan is not compatible with the fastidious, delicate life of an Athenian theatre-goer. What Rousseau calls "the burden of idleness" is a problem wherever an alternative to the Spartan's "simple and natural" tastes is presented. For "in a well-constituted state, every citizen has duties to fulfill; and he holds these important cares too dear to find leisure for frivolous speculations" (PN: δ19). He is without leisure (and thus, never idle), because even in the moments he is not working, his activities (which he sometimes does find very pleasing), nonetheless serve to enforce the community's *mores*. Once a polity's commitment to its traditional, rustic *mores* wavers ever so slightly, however, once the people, and especially those still in their formative years take time away from its duties, its rugged ways, its particular entertainments, and does so in order to *relax*, "that makes foreign amusements so necessary" (Ld'A: p.16). Due to that vice dwelling deep in the human heart, it is not long from the moment of their establishment that "foreign amusements" replace the simple charms of wholesome ways and manners—what made a people virtuous and free—with decadent ways and degenerate manners. It is worth repeating what Rousseau so often does: "altered *mores*" and "changed tastes" cannot "recover their health since they will be corrupted"; once a peoples' "innocent pleasures... have lost their charm", the wholesome way of life that depended on them can never be reestablished (Ld'A: p.125, 133). As the philosopher puts it in the *Social Contract*, once a polity's laws, opinions, and *mores* have lost their vigor, "all is hopeless"... "Freedom can be gained; but it is never recovered" (SC: 4.7.5, 2.8.4).

This, a rule established by centuries of historical examples, is one of the things Rousseau means to explicate in his *First Discourse*. In the first part of the discourse, he had underlined historical situations that establish a correlation between the corruption of *mores* and the establishment of the sciences and the arts. In the philosopher's words, he "began with the facts". For example, enriched by the spoils of war, the Romans, those 'most virtuous' of virtuous peoples, "admitted that military virtue died out among them when they became connoisseurs of paintings, engravings, jeweled vessels, and began to cultivate the fine arts" (PN: δ17; FD:.δ49). Rousseau goes so far as to contend that "the day of her fall was the eve of the day one of her citizens was given the title Arbiter of Good Taste" (FD: δ19). The "necessary connection" he endeavors to establish in the

second part of the discourse is a relatively simple one. The Fine Arts seduce men just as riches and luxuries do. They promise pleasure—to be sure, it is psychic, not bodily, pleasure, but pleasure just the same—and by doing so, they are insidiously seductive. Their power over men has proven almost irresistible, having moved men of virtually every time and place—Spartans, Romans, Athenians, as well as the Parisians. Thus, where the office of public censor is neglected, or where the office is no longer administered by astute and virtuous men, "the sorts of entertainments are determined necessarily by the pleasure they give and not by their utility. If utility is there too, so much the better. But the principal object is to please..." (Ld'A: p.18) In short, wherever these pleasures are permitted, they will be pursued, and everywhere this occurs, "true courage is enervated" and "military virtues disappear" for the sake of pleasant, but debilitating pursuits. What the ancients said—that virtue is hard... that the road to it is a long, steep, upward way—would seem to be true. Because of that malady eternal to the hearts of men, however, they need strong supports if they are to be persuaded to take the hard road when an easier, more pleasant way is presented to them.

As a result, elevating art is most difficult to come by. For where artists are permitted to entertain the public however they please, they endeavor to please the public however it is most pleased; to accomplish this, they turn to "entertainments which promote their penchants, whereas what is needed are entertainments which would moderate them" (Ld'A: p.18). When it comes to what motivates men of letters and whether their influence can ever be moderating, Rousseau is unusually categorical (especially for a man so famous for his novels). Rousseau is often so harshly critical of men of letters and their motivations, that it seems he would have us believe that salutary art is impossible except where a Rousseauean censorship executed by a Cato, (that best of good men), is operating in full force. For Rousseau is certain that of his contemporaries, there is not a single man of letters "who does not hold Cicero's eloquence in much higher esteem than his zeal, and who would not infinitely prefer to have written the *Cataline Orations* than to have saved his country" (LR: δ40). It is not that the philosopher has a particularly flattering opinion of Cicero and what moved him; it is that his opinion of his own contemporaries could hardly be lower. They are neither friends of truth nor friends of humanity; when Rousseau wonders whether he will have the good fortune to find "a

single reader who is impartial and a friend of the truth" he hardly seems optimistic (LR: δ40).

Perhaps it can be said that this malady, eternally in the hearts of virtually every artist of virtually every age, prevents their being useful to their polity. Tied irreparably to their cave by the basest of vanities—therefore, to men's esteem especially—what Rousseau says in his *First Discourse*, and then emphasizes everywhere, is largely true, perhaps even more so today than it was when he lamented it. "Every artist wants to be applauded. The praise of his contemporaries is the most precious part of his reward. What will he do to obtain praise therefore... He will lower his genius to the level of his time, and will prefer to compose ordinary works which are admired during his lifetime instead of marvels which would not be admired until long after his death" (FD: δ45). Since the cost of "firmness", of refusing "to yield to the spirit of [one's] times" is to "die in poverty and oblivion", he doubts the Fine Arts will find practitioners who will use their talents to "temper the ferociousness of the men they have corrupted", who will help him to "divert... and try to deceive their passions" (FD: δ26; Obs: δ63). Rousseau speaks from experience. While his artistic contemporaries pursue their own interests—riches and honors—to the detriment of the people's true interests, he attempted to show them the road to virtue, freedom, and "true felicity". But Rousseau is the anomaly, and the wrath of his contemporaries was his reward. Most who follow his lead will be neither rich nor famous (at least not in their own time), and while wise men may successfully cultivate an indifference to wealth and commodities, on Rousseau's account, not even they "are insensitive to glory". Thus, where a vulgar many distributes public honor, the prospect of dying "in misery and oblivion" can be a frightening one, even for the best of men (FD: δ55).

Rousseau, a friend of truth and humanity who wants to live beyond his century, accuses Voltaire (who calls himself Arouet) of sacrificing his genius and with it, the incomparable strong and beautiful models he had the talent to portray for posterity, examples which might have elevated men and women for centuries—and of doing so for the sake of baser, entirely worldly longings. His pleasures will end forever with his last breath, but his influence will go on. It might have been an influence worth remembering—one that made men and women better—but he, like most every artist,

"only follows public sentiment". "Far from choosing... the passions which he wants to make us like, he is forced to choose those which we like already"; as a result, he indulges and thereby feeds and strengthens those passions, something which can only serve to "augment the natural inclinations, and to give new energy to all the passions" (Ld'A: p.18-21). Thus, Voltaire, like most artists, conspires with man's lower passions to debase him.

So, instead of promoting virtue, patriotism, freedom, and wholesome *mores* in general, where "living conveniences multiply" and the fine arts "are perfected", men become ever more licentious, and increasingly devote their energies to seeking yet baser pleasures. Where art is not properly censored, where anyone can be an artist provided he can win the applause of ordinary men, the artist actually contributes to the vulgarization of men, making them contemptible (PN: δ26). More luxury, more art, but depraved versions of both abound because men's passions for them are fuelled at the theatre, in the museums, in the libraries and at university. The villains, and even the heroes portrayed in paintings, in literature and at the theatre do captivate men—they are designed to do that—but they only manage to do so by appealing to the lowest in us. For some reason, human beings are naturally attracted to tales of scandal, to sex, and to violence. To artists, these are proclivities which can be exploited in their quest for fame and riches. The effects of a polity's art on its citizenry certainly does depend on the specific nature of the polity in question, whether it is "good" to begin with, for instance. But in general, crime and vice are eventually glorified; virtue and goodness end by being ridiculed, and even if a polity began good, uncensored art and self-serving artists eventually make its *mores* bad. And so, Rousseau responds to Monsieur d'Alembert's suggestion that Geneva establish a theatre with a long letter containing valuable general advice: put simply, he explains why the development of the fine arts are "bad for [the polity] when [the polity] itself is good" (Ld'A: p.65).

If there is anything more pernicious for a polity than the establishment of the Fine Arts within its walls, however, it may be the establishment of Science. Rousseau provides ample evidence for a most disturbing correlation: "a people that is both virtuous and cultivates the sciences, that has never been seen" (LR: δ60). Like the Arts, "born in idleness, [science and philosophy] nourish it in turn" (FD: δ40). Young men are taken

away from the traditional ways and coarse work that might have made men out of them. They are idle except that they consume the state's resources (while providing absolutely nothing that is useful in return). Essentially, Rousseau portrays science not unlike Aristophanes did in *Clouds*, with its "thinkery" full of silly and useless, pasty-faced wastrels; thus, Rousseau seeks to undercut the status of science, or "vain philosophy." Devotion to science means devotion to irrelevant questions. Indeed, it is not hard to see why philosophers—"you who taught us in what proportions bodies attract each other in a vacuum... [and] what insects breed in an extraordinary manner"—are as useless to their polities as they are idle (FD: δ40).

"Did I say idle?" Rousseau continues, "Would God they really were! Morals would be healthier..." (FD: δ41). The sciences, "vain in the objects they have in view" really are "even more dangerous in the effects they produce", as Rousseau endeavors to show. If they were idle, they would be useless, but active as their vanity makes them, they are positively pernicious. For there is something inherently attractive to spirited youth in a man like Socrates. His ability to win eristic victories over the polity's eminent men—all revealed to be his inferiors—seduces that part of higher men that yearns to distinguish itself. And once philosophers—and worse yet, once their pale shadows, the sophists and the orators—once these manage to establish themselves as the polity's new most celebrated heroes, once the longing to compete in verbal sport brings boys from the fields into the ever-expanding marketplace to learn the art of clever speaking, the polity's wholesome opinions (and its gymnastic education to the extent there was one) are threatened with an immediate and potentially devastating danger. Young men aspire to be like Cleon, where he, not ancestral and heroic statesmen like Themistocles and even Pericles, is honored foremost. Again, what sustained healthy regimes is sacrificed as men's pleasures and the objects of a community's esteem are transformed: "a taste for letters, philosophy, and the fine arts destroys the love of our primary duties... Once talents preempt the honors owed to virtue, everyone wants to be an agreeable man, and no one to be a good man" (PN: δ21).

For where it is not dishonored, or better yet, outlawed, philosophy will appeal to young men, all the more so to some of the best among them. It is attractive to spirited, naturally rebellious youth precisely because of its capacity to challenge, and perhaps

overturn, even destroy all that their fathers had taught them—which, in essence, is to shake what lies at the very foundation of the regime. "[A]rmed with their deadly paradoxes", philosophers, and especially those who merely fancy themselves philosophic, make a game of "undermining the foundations of faith and annihilating virtue" (FD: δ41). That "Empire of opinion", that "Queen of the world"—*un*truths essential to good *mores* and wholesome political life—are necessarily endangered by the attempt to replace all opinion with knowledge, or more typically, the vanity-fuelled attempt to refute time-tested opinion in order to prove oneself superior. New glories replace "true glory", that which men who distinguished themselves on the battlefield once enjoyed, and the polity's highest honors shift further in favor of the destructive talents which threaten it. Talents, what "nature gives", are preferred to virtue, what "men acquire", and so impressionable men turn their energies toward feigning talents they do not possess instead of endeavoring to acquire virtue (which is much harder, but might well make them better and happier; PN: δ21). Where the polity's highest honors belong to sophists, orators and lawyers, the polity's best men will learn to speak well to the detriment of learning to act well. The *First Discourse* closes by underlining this distinction; there, Rousseau's very last words remind the reader of a "glorious distinction noted between two great peoples long ago" (FD: δ62). Spartans learned to act well from the moment of their birth, while Athenians devoted themselves to learning how to speak well. In his *Last Reply*, Rousseau makes his point most boldly: in all of Greece, virtue was "purest" and "lasted longest" in the one state in which philosophers were not permitted (LR: δ41). Similarly, it was not until Rome was filled with philosophers and orators that "military discipline was neglected, agriculture was scorned... and the fatherland forgotten... Until then the Romans had been content to practice virtue; all was lost when they began to study it" (FD: δ31).

In this connection, it is surely worth noting that Rousseau blames "the selfish and ill-conceived projects and the dangerous innovations" proposed in assembly by ordinary Athenians (who were permitted to speak there, even to propose legislation) for "finally [ruining] the Athenians" (SD: ded. δ9). Earlier, he had exaggerated a similar point: "Historians unanimously maintain, that the corruption of the Athenians' *mores* and of their government was due to the orators" (Obs: δ34). Where a people's sacred opinions

are undermined in the name of private interest (whether that be the fame of a reputation for speaking well in public, a selfish project conceived for the material benefit of a man or a particular group at the wider public's expense, or most often, when rhetoric is employed in the service of selfish yearnings), the shared convictions responsible for the public spirit are necessarily eroded. Overcome by their individualistic passions, citizens become nothing more than self-interested men, and little remains to direct their energies in salutary ways. They may learn to speak well (many do), but they learn to speak in order to conceal how badly they act (this is nicely epitomized by Aristophanes' Strepsiades who sends his son to Socrates' thinkery to learn how to speak cleverly in an explicit attempt to subvert the law).

Who seeks truth sincerely? Very few, according to Rousseau. He does not entirely exclude himself. He admits how seductive the esteem even of those he opposed, has proven to be over the course of his own career. But he contends his contemporaries' conduct in the face of his own success has done "more for [his] cause than would all [his] discourses" (PN: δ3). Their venomous critiques of the discourse itself, the malicious attacks directed against Rousseau's person instead of the "truths" he had established—all of it was born of resentment, jealousy, and self-interest. Thus, Rousseau's few replies were, in fact, "perhaps too many." And why should he be required to reply to authors "capable of writing this way"? (LNR: δ7). Rather than concerning themselves with the truth, they defended their own narrow exploits and indulged their petty vanity irrespective of the truth, or even (he suspects) of what they themselves believed. As Rousseau's "opponents" demonstrate so unfalteringly by their example, virtually all those who dabble in philosophy do so for the same reasons, and in the very same manner artists make art. To the detriment of what is beneficial to their colleagues and students, their aim is to impress (through tales of scandal, by flattering their fellows and followers, by articulating what is fashionable), and their audience is, if not the rather ordinary many, then their often-vulgar contemporaries—men who are generally moved by the base longings. And where personal glory and reputation are the practitioner's chief concern, men are wont to "smile disdainfully at the old-fashioned words of fatherland and religion, and devote their talents and the fruit of their philosophizing to destroying and debasing all that is sacred among men" (FD: δ41). In short, the majority of men who develop a

taste for "philosophy" are neither friends of humanity nor friends of truth. Indeed, they are apt to lie just to please, and so often, what pleases is damaging. Thus, they are "enemies of public opinion"; and if philosophers endanger the polity's fundamental opinions about what is just and honorable, they are enemies of the polity altogether. They dabble in science, art, and letters expressly to satisfy their "craving for distinction", and where nothing exists to restrain their damaging endeavors (but much exists to encourage them in that their reputations are enhanced the more destructive their activities), their efforts have the singular effect of loosening "all the bonds of esteem and benevolence that tie men to society" (PN: δ25).

As noted, this is especially the case when it comes to what ties men to their polity most powerfully—religious conviction. The philosopher devotes a section of his *Observations* nearly half as long as the discourse itself to this very question. That engagement in science distracts men from studying the Bible and learning their duties seems to be one of his chief criticisms (Obs: δ32). "What benefit has Religion derived from [flourishing sciences]?" Rousseau asks somewhat scornfully. "Science spreads, and faith disappears," nicely summarizes his position on this most important issue (Obs: δ47). Men have become doctors at the cost of becoming good Christians. The reason this enlightenment ideal is so problematic is that by their very nature, science and philosophy are cosmopolitan. The truth does not change between polities, but polities' "sacred opinions" must be distinctive in order to maintain the "national individuality" Rousseau thought so important. (Strauss, incidentally emphasizes this point; cf. IR: p.274-75; NRH: p.257). Because of its dubious solidity, religion cannot be preserved where men are permitted to expose its contradictions (whether they aim to solve them, or simply to boast of their cleverness). When a polity's faith is no longer presented as the single respectable view (a simple and indisputable truth buttressed by the power of antiquity)—but, say, as one of the many religions men around the (round) world practice—questions regarding its veracity are inevitable, both among men driven to satisfy a powerful curiosity, and among ordinary men seeking steadfast opinions according to which they can live their lives.

As a subtle indication of his own philosophical perspective, Rousseau cites Caliph Omar approvingly in this connection. In a note appended to the short discussion on the

impact of the advent of printing in his *First Discourse*, ("thanks to typography and the use we make of it, the dangerous dreams of Hobbes and Spinoza will remain forever")[21], Rousseau recognizes that the wide dissemination of alternatives made possible by the invention of the printing press, has proven deleterious to religion. Since the active consideration of such alternatives might be called one root of philosophy, and since philosophizing necessarily undermines faith in revealed opinion where practiced openly, as the Caliph recognizes, books that contain anything opposed to the Koran are "bad" and must therefore be burned. He goes further than his, however, advising, "if they contain only the doctrine of the Koran, burn them anyway—they are superfluous" (FD: δ59*n*). Rousseau appreciates that the attempt to reconcile alien material with religious doctrine is also potentially damaging to religious conviction. In another work, Rousseau offers an example; not surprisingly, he refers to the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Both "very nearly came to be placed on the Altar alongside of Jesus Christ", an early development which, at the time, divided the clergy (Obs: δ42-43). To expand an important point, then, the very existence of alternatives, even alternatives which are "officially" accounted for by reigning religion, jeopardizes the religion's power over men, especially where religious authority—God's very ministers—advocate different interpretations. And once alternatives are introduced, much is lost insofar as any attempt to eliminate foreign influence after the fact—in this case, the "worldy science" of Greek philosophy—cannot but "soil [religion's] purity" (Obs: δ43).

It is probably worth repeating that where philosophy is practiced and encouraged, "national hatreds will die out, but so will love of country." But since "the philosophy of each people are but little suited for another", the protection of national individualities

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[21] Thanks to the printing press, and scientific development in general, it should be noted that what we generally refer to as the *Renaissance* will be the *last* reestablishment of the sciences and the arts. Until quite recently, a return to the dark ages and a more or less barbaric condition was always a possibility (FD: δ8). Hobbes' new political science, aimed at ensuring lasting political stability and prosperity, has (not surprisingly) promoted the wide dissemination of science and literature within stable and peaceful regimes. When Rousseau says that the dangerous dreams of Hobbes "will remain forever", he does mean *for ever*. The existence of technologies like printing (and digital storage medias) means that what we have collectively learned and popularized will *never* be unlearned short of the end of society as we know it (something technological development in the military sphere has also made possible). In this light, it is not difficult to understand why Rousseau believes Hobbes' dangerous dreams have implications for all of humanity.

requires that a polity foster a warlike spirit if it means to defend itself. National hatreds and love of country cannot be permitted to expire if national "philosophies" (beginning with a polity's gods and rituals), and everything they help to inculcate in the citizenry, are to persist. "True philosophy", and especially the vain pursuit enlightenment thinkers were altogether eager to call philosophy, enervate a polity's characteristic traditions, and especially the polity's warlike temperament (to the extent it was a martial society), by attempting to replace national philosophies with "the common science of the wise" (SD: note *j*). It is certainly true that the vast majority of those who dabble in philosophy will fail miserably in their quest for "that universal knowledge which is not that of one century or one country exclusively". Their pursuits are nonetheless cosmopolitan in nature, however; they introduce foreign literature, foreign philosophies, and sometimes even foreign gods. The poisonous fruit of this quasi-philosophizing is surely what Rousseau is referring to when he cites the "many errors, a thousand times more dangerous than the truth is useful" that most encounter (and which must be surmounted) in order to reach the truth (FD: δ39).

For even men of science who are relatively free of vanity and are driven by "the best intentions" can pose an enormous threat to any wholesome polity (FD: δ39). The very act of *questioning* can be incredibly pernicious in that all new opinions, even false opinions, have the power to undermine the sacred beliefs which were once accepted absolutely on a people's trust of its ministers and its ancestors. To see why all idle interrogation must be prohibited in a healthy regime, it suffices to consider the effects of Copernicus' helio-centric revision to received (divine) opinion on the workings of the universe. Though it hardly turned out to constitute the entire truth on the matter of earth's place (and therefore, man's place) within and with respect to the cosmos, and although his account was not complete or completely without errors, his efforts were sufficiently detrimental to the religious orthodoxy that the Church saw fit to censor, or at least attempt to censor, what he had proposed. There would be no doubt that Rousseau would support such censorship except that his analysis of contemporary Christianity—especially with regard to its failure as a "civil religion"—complicates the matter greatly. Leaving this question aside until Part Two and Part Three where these questions are most profitably discussed, however, it does remain hard to deny that the traditional view

affirms life in a way our modern view does not. Indeed, to believe that earth is at the very center of the universe, and that everything else revolves around *us*, even that an omnipotent God created man in His own image, and that, in the end, He cares enough to judge the use we have made of our brief hour upon the stage, can promote living and living well. Our modern evolutionary account of the cosmos, on the other hand—that human beings and the universe we live in are the result of a sheer fluke of an indifferent natural order bereft of any order—simply does not. It is not very hard to account for our century's nihilism, its hedonism, and its moral poverty; in essence, we teach our children that they have nothing to live for—not their polity, not their faith, and increasingly, not even their family. Whether or not the solutions science and philosophy propose are true, then, the simple act of raising these questions regarding the veracity of received opinion is sufficient to cast doubt on, and eventually to annihilate, a polity's traditional ways (which *were* oftentimes life-affirming). What it replaces them with, though sometimes *closer* to the truth of things (but opinions nonetheless), can often have life-corrupting consequences.

In addition to undermining citizens' attachments to each other and to their fatherland, which has the added consequence of drawing them away from their duties and the polity's traditions, "a taste for letters, philosophy and the fine arts softens bodies and souls" (PN: δ23). Rousseau makes much of the fact that a man's strength of soul may well depend on strength of body. By appending the *First Discourse*'s longest note to the "wise" (and often repeated) advice that children engage in the sort of activities which will cultivate strong bodies (as opposed to teaching them science and an appreciation for fine art), it is implied that Lycurgus' "monstrously perfect" education *necessarily* begins with gymnastic education. A taste for labor, for victory, for self-rule and moderation—all inculcated through the body—may well be indispensable to cultivating the virtues of a strong soul. To support and encourage valor, prudence and justice in young men, for instance, Lycurgus reportedly devised a rearing which would begin by making bodies "handsome and healthy", this by teaching children to ride and hunt (FD: δ52, δ52*n*). By bringing men in from the fields, by ending their martial training, and by replacing their hardy games with the study of foreign languages and obscene art, on the other hand, "studies" threaten to "destroy" strength and enervate courage (FD: δ48; SD: 1.11). Men

who spend their days in the thinkery are rarely full of energy and vigor, nor are they ordinarily robust or strong; in fact, single-minded devotion to learning is precisely "how men grow cowardly and pusillanimous, equally incapable of withstanding pain and the passions" (PN: δ23). Psychic strength and fortitude vanish with their bodily correlates, and men are left depraved and contemptible.

Rousseau emphasizes the practical political implications of neglecting gymnastic education in favor of studies and vain learning. In the end, the development of the sciences and the arts dissolves both the polity's will to defend itself by eroding its patriotism and alienating its members, just as it compromises a polity's means of defending itself by rendering already-psychically-soft "citizens" unfit to endure the hardships of war. Thus, where athletic and martial training are abandoned in favor of teaching high-society etiquette drawing-room decorum, and technical artfulness, a polity begins ails from the inside to be sure, but its very existence will eventually be threatened from without. Rousseau's questions should resonate especially with modern men.

> What view of hunger, thirst, fatigues, dangers, and death can men have if they are crushed by the smallest need and rebuffed by the least difficulty? Where will soldiers find the courage to bear excessive work to which they are totally unaccustomed? With what kind of spirit will they make forced marches under officers who do not even have the strength to travel on horseback? (FD: δ50).

For the very same reasons modern man would, if deprived of everything the sciences and the arts have provided, be little match for Rousseau's strong and admirable savage, a modern army deprived of the military fruits of modern science would easily be slaughtered by a Spartan army one one-hundredth its size. With a modern army behind him, Rousseau admits Caesar could have crossed the Rubicon to enslave an already-decadent and degenerate Rome, but this is certainly not intended to be high praise. For with such an army, not even Caesar could have conquered a virtuous people. As the Romans were softened by riches, luxury and fine art, so our "soft and effeminate way of life completes the enervation of both [our] strength and [our] courage"; no more than "a little sun or snow, or the lack of a few superfluities is necessary to dissolve and destroy the best of our armies in a few days" (SD: 2.11; FD: δ50).

All of this—increased riches and luxuries, and the explosion of science and art it makes possible—explains how Sparta, comprised of merely "a handful of peasants", made Persia tremble... why Cyrus' kingdom was conquered by a prince "poorer than the least significant Persian satrap"... why the Roman Republic, "founded by a shepherd and made famous by farmers", in its days of poverty and ignorance was a free and virtuous nation worthy of "governing the earth" (FD: δ42, δ19, δ28, δ33). At once, it explains how and why the Roman Empire, once home to the most virtuous people that ever was, "after devouring all the wealth in the universe, was prey to a people who did not even know what wealth was" (FD: δ43). And it explains why conquering peoples are well advised not to destroy the very libraries, academies, and universities that rendered their enemy soft, idle, and conquerable (FD: δ48).

PART TWO:

The End of "Citizen" and "Fatherland" in Europe

Civilized Europe, Barbarous Poland

Rousseau's advice to the few polities in which the accumulation of great wealth and luxury had not occurred, and in which science and art were not prospering, was emphatic: he insisted that they resist their establishment with all their energy and ability. But might it already have been too late for prevention? The few enclaves which remained capable of receiving good laws and resisting the real depravity modern political life permits—in Rousseau's time: Geneva, Poland and Corsica, for instance—were all facing tremendous, perhaps even insurmountable, challenges to their exceptionalism.

In his *Considerations on the Government of Poland and its Projected Reformation*, Rousseau discusses the circumstances that had preserved one of these enclaves, doing so with the supposed aim of establishing how and why his conspicuously classical reforms to its constitution remained possible. Indeed, in that respect Poland compares most favorably with the rest of Europe, at least at first glance. While the countries of Europe had grown wealthy and decadent, Poland was "depopulated", "devastated", and "oppressed". Ironically, it was Poland, barely subsisting amidst the throes of anarchy, that was preserved. In the meantime, a cosmopolitan spirit infected the nations to its West as the democratic-enlightenment ideal consumed them. Thus, the Poles alone remained true to themselves as Poles. Rousseau contends that nationalism and patriotism had been eroded everywhere else. Because of the development and extensive dissemination of the sciences and the arts, national philosophies and national individualities had all but disappeared throughout Europe: "there are no more Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, even Englishmen, nowadays, regardless of what people may say; there are only Europeans. All have the same tastes, the same passions, the same morals, because none has been given a national form by a distinctive institution" (CGP: 3.3). Rousseau's Europe was animated by a singular love of riches and all that riches provides, the cost of which had been parochial conceptions of citizenship and fatherland. Republicanism, public spiritedness, even the preference for higher freedoms—all had

been sacrificed for the sake of modernity's seductive promise of a repose that Rousseau contends is imaginary. The martial valor that had for a long time buttressed civic virtue, mattered much less; a longing to appear virtuous and sophisticated had replaced ordinary motivations to be good; ostentation had taken the place of erudition. The problem was a wider European problem; in Rousseau's words, "A Frenchman, an Englishman, a Spaniard, an Italian, a Russian, all are more or less the same man: they all leave school already molded for a higher degree, that is to say for servitude" (CGP: 4.2).

For one reason or another, Poland, along with a few other enclaves, was temporarily shielded from what seems to be an almost inevitable historical degeneration, one which eventually affects all civilizations according to Rousseau. The modern indifference to every "moral" concern is what Rousseau finds so problematic, and it had resulted from the irreparable softening of Europeans grown accustomed to extravagance and debauchery. It is not necessarily that Rousseau accuses Europeans of succumbing to all the vices, but more damningly perhaps, he attributes to them the particular vices "of cowardly souls": "as for the vices requiring courage and fortitude, [he] believe[s] [Europeans] are incapable of them" (LR: δ33). The cost of becoming "civilized" had been man's resilience and vigor. As a result, modern Europeans had grown incapable of civic virtue. Comparing *learned* peoples with more primitive, more ignorant ones, Rousseau discerns at least one important difference. "All barbarous peoples, even those that are without virtue, nevertheless always honor virtue, whereas learned and Philosophic Peoples by dint of progress eventually succeed in turning virtue into an object of derision and despising it" (LR: δ14). As they are portrayed in the *Considerations*, the Poles are not quite barbarians, but they certainly are not bourgeois; as a result, this critical distinction remains valid—the Poles still honor virtue while Europeans concern themselves exclusively with economics, fashion, and other petty concerns instead. This is a distinction fundamental to Rousseau's optimism with respect to Poland, Geneva and Corsica, and at the same time, his pessimism with respect to Europe. On the face of it, Rousseau's formula seems simple enough: a people that honors virtue produces virtuous men; a people that honors wealth, luxury, and ostentation produces villainous slaves. And so an important question arises: *Is it possible to inculcate a taste for virtue in men long since despoiled by base and ruinous opinions?*

Things look bleak for Europe. It is worth repeating what Rousseau repeats regarding the importance of proper public censorship in his *Social Contract*, his *Letter to d'Alembert*, and his *Last Reply*. The office of censor must be established while the laws are in their vigor, while the people in question honors the *right* things and their laws reflect and protect those standards. For once the laws have ceded all vigor, once Rousseau's fourth, most important sort of law is no longer firmly graven in the hearts of the citizens, "all is hopeless; nothing legitimate any longer has force when the laws no longer have any" (SC: 4.7.5). Alternatively put, "the censorship can be useful in preserving morals, never in restoring them" (SC: 4.7.5). Better laws, a reformed constitution, perhaps even Rousseau's best effort—all, it seems, are sought in vain if reforming Europe (already hopelessly decadent, according to classical conceptions of freedom and virtue) is the end. While Poland—more barbarous than bourgeois—has yet to gain civil freedom, Europe's opportunity may well have passed some time ago. Thus it is that modern men—thoroughly, but happily enslaved by desires run rampant in times of great license—tend not to concern themselves with Rousseau's emphatic maxim. It is one he cautions *free* people to remember well (and one which the few moderns who do note it, can do so only with great trepidation): "Freedom can be gained, but it can never be recovered" (SC: 2.8.4).

As a result, while Rousseau can categorically declare with regard to Europe that, "once a nation has reached this point, it can be said that corruption is at its zenith and there is no more hope of remedies", in Poland's case, a state where "souls still have great resilience", he asserts that it is still possible to *preserve* and *restore* "simple morals", "wholesome tastes", and a "warlike spirit free of ambition" (LR: δ14; CGP: 11.2). And so while the paths "by which the ancients led men to that vigor of soul, to that patriotic zeal, to that esteem for the truly personal qualities" is unknown to the moderns (and according to Rousseau, cannot be known), as Poland emerges from its current crisis, this *pre-modern* state can, "renewing itself so to speak by itself…resume at this stage of its life all the vigor of a nascent nation" (CGP: 4.8). Since the souls of the Poles can be *tightened*, then, and insofar as the body politic "still displays the fire of youth… and dares to call for a government and laws, as if it had only just been born," the state can, in fact, be reborn ("the nation will date its second birth from the terrible crisis from which it

is emerging"; CGP: 1.2, 4.8). In stark contrast, it seems all hope for a renewal of classical virtue in Europe is essentially lost inasmuch as the souls of ordinary Europeans can only (and will only) continue to *slacken*, an important threshold having been passed some time ago.

If Rousseau is correct that the best kind of political reform—that which might generate a polity dedicated to citizenship and civic virtue—is futile for most nations in modern times, perhaps the philosopher means to encourage those who are troubled by their modern predicament through pointing to a few polities where wholesome political life, even the virtue and freedom of antiquity, may still be possible. Perhaps Poles, Corsicans, and Genevans—fortunate to have somehow escaped Europe's affliction for one reason or another—can still be cultivated to realize civil freedom and civic virtue. But, then again, perhaps Rousseau means to show why one ought draw the very opposite conclusion.

For in order to be encouraged by the portrait of a reformed and rejuvenated Poland that Rousseau paints for his readers, those readers would have to have believed the philosopher's proposed reforms were actually possible. For whatever reason, Rousseau assures his reader (repeatedly) that his suggestions are entirely realizable. In fact, he claims his project for reform does not even require the sort of wholesale, "re[birth] from its ashes" revolution Rousseau attributes to Sparta at the time of Lycurgus, or Rome after the Tarquin's had sacked the city (SC: 2.9.3). On the contrary, he insists that his suggestions "are not fundamental and do not appear to be very great"; that he has proposed, "as few changes in it as [he] could in order to correct its defects"; and that he would leave "the foundation of [Poland's] laws virtually untouched" (CGP: 15.1, 15.9, 3.5).

And so without revolution, the philosopher would have his readers believe that the king's power can be substantially reduced; the number of Senators lowered; the assembly's veto abolished or its power fundamentally diminished ("made dangerous to exercise it"); an important number of slaves emancipated; a sort of martial bourgeoisie elevated; a disdain for money and preference for corvés inculcated; a radically reformed curriculum for the education of the young devised and instituted; myriad public officials and statesmen reared according to its principles; *provincial* Dietines and provisions for

confederation reformed (and "perfected"); and the list of imperative modifications goes on—all of which, taken together according to Rousseau, "are not fundamental and do not appear to be very great" (CGP: 9.11). Whether or not one agrees with Rousseau's assessment of his project's scope, accomplishing these tasks in the twenty years the Russians will be distracted by the Turks—which Rousseau insists *is* realizable, and which he promises will successfully erect "good citadels in the citizens' hearts" and transform the Poles into a sort of Spartan who will surprise the Russians the next time they invade—is surely not an uncomplicated matter (CGP: 13.11).

If restructuring Canada's Senate, or reforming America's Electoral College are not within the realm of what is *politically* possible, it is difficult to imagine that Poland's King will nonchalantly allow his authority to be reduced, while a number of the Senators idly watch as their positions disappear, while the deputies permit their veto to be abolished or modified importantly, while the bourgeoisie trades its slaves for new honors, while the nobility quietly accepts that same bourgeoisie rises in prominence... and all within a meager couple of decades. None of this seems to square with Rousseau's caution against "shaking up the machine too brusquely" or "surprising and deceiving the Nation about the changes that have to be made in its laws", nor his professed preference for moving slowly and leaving "most of those who hold office where there are", replacing them or dissolving the positions as they die or retire (CGP: 15.7). Indeed, among numerous other things, his proposed reformation presumes the wholehearted cooperation of a large number of seemingly ordinary, self-interested magistrates. It presumes a near-universal appreciation of the problem Rousseau elucidates, and a widespread subscription to the Rousseauean values which inform his solution. All in all, it presumes the Polish disposition to be malleable enough that change is possible where the philosopher deems change is necessary, but at the same time firm enough to preserve everything that has saved the Polish soul up to this point. What is more, it presumes the emergence of a willing political architect of the highest order—one who is not only willing, but capable of instituting such reforms. And it presumes the populace would be willing to trust a French man of letters who admits to knowing little of their country, and of whom (happily, according to the philosopher) the Poles know little, if anything.

That is to say, even if all of this were indeed possible within twenty years and without revolution, it would take a philosophic and kingly man to institute the changes Rousseau envisions in his *Considerations*. Jean-Jacques Rousseau has certainly not volunteered for this task. Honored as he claims he would be to be a Pole, Rousseau admits an important limitation: he lacks "full knowledge of local conditions and particular details which are impossible to convey in writing and which one nevertheless needs to know in order to conform an institution to the people for whom it is intended", an understanding that constitutes one of the two necessary theoretical requirements for the successful realization of a project for reform such as the one he seems to be proposing in his *Considerations* (CGP: 1.1). Furthermore, he claims that he has not been as successful as he was eager when it comes to the second requirement: the practical establishment of the theoretical generalities he considers himself better suited to discuss (CGP: 15.9). Add to this his professed omission of "many very important topics about which [he] did not feel sufficiently knowledgeable to judge soundly", not to mention the altogether unlikely realization of a key political requirement for his project—the emergence of other men "more knowledgeable and wiser…than [Rousseau]" who would willingly undertake such reforms—and one sees why positive reform and good revolutions are so rare. If Rousseau is right that the emergence of a Lawgiver is a nearly miraculous event, and that it is "deliberate self-deception" to count on the ascension of a good king, one perceives why, with reference to these musings, Rousseau quietly admits, near the end of his *Considerations on the Government of Poland and on its Projected Reformation*, "perhaps all this is just so many chimeras" (CGP: 9-10; SC: 3.6.15).

But if the philosopher is chasing chimeras, and if he was well aware that meaningful reform would be as unlikely in Poland as it was impossible in Europe, then Rousseau's *political* intention here remains, for the time being at least, a mystery. There is no doubt, however, but that it accomplishes a great deal *philosophically*. For Rousseau's *Considerations* certainly serves to strengthen the argument he advances carefully but impressively in the *Social Contract* and more overtly, in the *First Discourse*—specifically, his belief that human artfulness is responsible for an almost inevitable historical decline in the sort of wholesome political arrangements which can sometimes be established in felicitous circumstances. It may well be that Rousseau's

Considerations are most fruitfully interpreted as depicting the seeming exception that proves the rule. Poland, in the end, turns out to be the exception that could not have been excepted for very long (nor was it excepted for very long).

Thus, in the first place, Rousseau's *Considerations*, though overtly a discussion of Poland, must be read as a commentary on Europe and the ultimate ramifications of the advancement of science and art, which has resulted in arrant decadence and ostentation. For if Rousseau does have a project for political reform in mind, a theoretical understanding of the major obstacles in the way of reestablishing wholesome political life of any sort—an understanding of what polities everywhere are up against, so to speak—will be the first step in achieving an understanding of that project. In *Emile*, Rousseau notes, "one must know what should be in order to judge well what is". It seems equally true, however, that in order to know what sort of reform ought to be undertaken, one must first understand what *can be*. Just as the philosopher recognizes that while "there may be as many governments differing in nature as there are states differing in size," there is always a particular government best suited to the body politic's particular historical situation (SC: 3.1.15). Rousseau does not address the impact of historical development as explicitly as he does the physical characteristics of the polity's territory; nonetheless, history's role is equally important when it comes to what *can be* (or, in this case, what cannot be), in effect determining what sorts of reform ought to be undertaken.

It is possible to identify at least three major reasons for the historical degeneration the philosopher elucidates—two of them intrinsic to political life. The first is the executive's tendency to usurp the legislative authority, a tendency innately connected to the same "malady" eternally in men's souls which directs scientific and artistic development so haphazardly and so badly. The second emerges from the first, with the realities of international relations and the eventual temptation for (and perhaps even necessity of) conquest and the pursuit of empire. The third, both Rousseau and Montesquieu argue, is more particular, but a result of the second general reason. It emerged from the realities of international relations, and perhaps, more than the first two factors, it changed the world forever—namely the spread of Christianity and the eventual reaction to it the form of the Enlightenment. Having briefly considered these three factors, one may be in better position to determine whether Rousseau actually urges the

project for political reform that his *Considerations*, taken at face value, appears to. At the same time, it might provide an important clue into the philosopher's genuine political teaching.

The Inevitable Usurpation of the Legislative Authority

Rousseau is absolutely adamant: "it must sooner or later come to pass that the Prince ends up oppressing the Sovereign and breaking the Social Treaty. This is the inherent and inevitable vice which relentlessly tends to destroy the body politic from the moment of its birth, just as old age and death destroy a man's body" (SC: 3.10.1). Even though Rousseau believes that it is possible to "rewind and tighten the spring in proportion as it gives way"—precisely the sort of thing he advocates for Poland on the surface—every polity, like every man, "begins to die as soon as it is born and carries within itself the causes of its destruction" (SC: 3.10.4, 3.11.2). Not even the best constituted states—neither Sparta, nor Republican Rome, that most virtuous of all states, nor even the Poland and Geneva Rousseau allows himself to imagine—could hope to last forever. In Rousseau's words, "all the works of men are imperfect, transitory and perishable, as they themselves are" (CGP: 15.9).

The main reason for this inevitable decline, for the Prince's final usurpation of the sovereign authority, is what Montesquieu calls "a malady eternal in man". As he notes in his own *Considerations* (*on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* [« Décadence »]), due to this all-too-human and ubiquitous condition, "the plebeians, who had obtained tribunes to defend themselves, used them for attacking" (CRGD: ch.8). Rousseau concurs, declaring categorically that "it is impossible to make laws which men's passions do not abuse" (CGP: 1.5). The Gracchi and Cataline affairs are perfect examples of this seemingly incorrigible tendency. In his *Social Contract,* Rousseau laments the situations that made both men infamous; each is blamable for having put his own particular interest ahead of Rome's, and for having attempted to use the base inclinations dwelling deep within a generally virtuous multitude in their attempts to gain political influence.

Before either man rose to prominence, Rome—a polity driven to conquer "by necessity and, so to speak, in spite of [itself]"—was engulfed in a conflict with a rich and

formidable opponent that had gone on for decades. Carthage was an oligarchy, a commercial power, and as a result, extremely wealthy. The catalyst for the First Punic War had been the collision of the two powers' interests in Sicily—specifically Syracuse. Carthage attempted conciliation while Rome convinced herself Carthage was a threat to her security. Rome went to war without trepidation and with great success. By the time the contest ended, however, Rome's objectives had shifted. The conflict became a war for plunder; Rome drove Carthage from Syracuse, and finally it became a war for all of Sicily. Though it acquired territory more or less accidentally, for the first time Rome enjoyed the dividends that a policy of expansionism naturally yields. Unhappily for her, the spoils of war included influence over a number of colonies which had been established in the days of Greek colonialism. And so, somewhat ironically, the wealth and luxuries of southern Italy came at a tremendous cost. Luxuries multiplied, but perhaps even more damaging was the increased leisure provided to the upper classes—especially since it came with new ways to spend it. Greek drama was discovered and quickly translated into Latin for Roman audiences. Sadly, it began to draw them away from the principles and convictions which had made the Romans Roman. Their religion was slowly transformed to incorporate the Greek deities—one notable addition being Minerva, patron of the arts. And with Greek poetry and theatre came the sciences, or Greek philosophy, and its effect would ultimately be devastating.

The Second Punic War was uglier. Rome suffered a series of devastating military setbacks at Hannibal's hand, including its worst-ever military defeat at Cannae, but by the end of a war that grew increasingly gruesome as it proceeded, Carthage was reduced to its environs, it surrendered its fleet, and was forced to pay Rome a huge indemnity. It may have marked the end of Old Rome— The countryside was depopulated. Many farmers had fought and died; others had moved into the city to work in the arms industry. Among these, a large proportion preferred the idle and more luxurious urban lifestyle and would never return to farming. Farmland became cheap. The end of hostilities led to an increase in the circulation of capital. Large landowners increased their holdings as soldier-farmers returned home to find themselves ruined in their long absence. The temptation to employ slave labor where there was an abundance of men and shortage of land was irresistible. The poor became poorer while the wealthy became wealthier.

Concentrated riches meant more and more attention could be devoted to life's relishes. Vineyards, olive groves, and ranches replaced Roman wheat fields, made up for by grains imported from Egypt and the republic's outer regions. The independent farmers that had remained in the Roman countryside could no longer compete. Honor was drained from the rustic rural life that had, until then, motivated Romans to become good citizens. It was the end of "the first Romans' simple morals, their disinterestedness, their taste for agriculture, their contempt for commerce and the ardor for gain"; in short, Rousseau's prefered Rome—whose citizens were once "the most virtuous people that ever was"—was quickly coming to an end.

Some call the Second Punic War history's most important war (Robinson: 3h02m). Not only had years of brutal conflict ended by introducing Romans to wealth and luxury they could not have earlier imagined, transforming Rome and her citizens forever, but the Republic had been forced to treat many cities and provinces, regarded (and treated) as allies up until the second contest with Carthage, then and afterward as her subjects. Raising adequate manpower and resources was difficult in the midst of protracted hostility, and so Rome had turned to force and the threat of force in her dealings with polities lying within her sphere of influence. Thanks in large part to the soldiers supplied by these nations, Rome was finally victorious, but things would never return to their former state. The profits of an expansionist foreign policy had been noted and celebrated. Rome's disposition toward war had shifted importantly, and it would determine the course of Mediterranean history for six centuries to follow, and in many respects, world history.

Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, (whom Livy calls "by far the ablest and most energetic youth of his time") had been a courageous military leader during Rome's final war with Carthage (Livy: Vol. 5, p.194). Some historians assert he was the first to scale its walls. Upon his return to Rome, however, he complained bitterly that those who bore arms for the state enjoyed nothing more than air and light, all the while fighting and dying for the wealth and luxury of others. He was elected tribune in 133BC almost exclusively on the support of Rome's urban poor and once elected, he raised the issue of the tribune's right to initiate legislation, while questioning the Senate's constitutional authority to do the same. Eventually, the Senate vetoed his proposal for land reforms, but

the Senate's veto was vetoed by a unanimous vote of the plebeians' ten tribunes once Tiberius managed to replace the lone dissenting voice with a candidate who shared his opinions. In the end, a mob incited by a Senator—Pontifex Maximus—bludgeoned Tiberius and three hundred of his supporters to death and threw their bodies into the Tiber River. Violence from civil faction was new to Rome. In fact, inflamed as it was by the growing disparity of wealth between rich and poor made possible by continued conquest, Tiberius' death marked Rome's first recorded political murder in four hundred years.

Unfortunately, it marked the first of many; repressive force would have to take the place of social passion. Gaius Gracchus, Tiberius' younger brother, was elected tribune in 123 and 122BC. He pushed for further land reforms and sought Roman citizenship for those Italians who had fought alongside Rome's armies. In the end, amidst political intrigue, the Senate forced Gaius and his supporters from Rome to Avertine Hill where the consul's army slaughtered them. A reward had been offered for Gaius' head—an equal weight in gold—and it was the soldier who decapitated the younger Gracchus who collected the reward, but not before scooping out Gaius' brain in order to fill his skull with lead.

The problem is as inescapable as Rousseau's examples make it manifest. It emerges from an undeniable fact Rousseau is right to make much of: "each individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to or different from the general will he has as a citizen" (SC: 1.8.7). It is a remnant of man's natural freedom and that "natural right of every man to everything"—that which great Lawgivers, when they arise, are supposed to refine and transform to make citizens of narrowly self-interested individuals. "Numa was the true founder of Rome", according to Rousseau. With the (indispensable) help of religion, he, like all "ancient Lawgivers", instituted "bonds that might attach the citizens to the fatherland and to one another" (CGP: 2.7). In this, he was almost inconceivably successful; however, it was the growing prosperity that Roman patriotism made possible, and with it, Rome's ever-increasing population and territory, which ultimately led to the inevitable erosion of those same bonds.

The Gracchi brothers and those who continued to fight for their reforms after their deaths represented a growing group of self-interested Romans—Romans who were more

concerned with their share of the spoils of war, Romans who were covetous of the patricians' wealth and luxury, Romans who were no longer, so to speak, Romans. They saw their own well-being from up close, and as they directed their energies to pursuing their particular interests—preferring a lead-filled skull's weight in gold to duty, for instance—Rome's good became less and less of a concern

Once upon a time, the polity's shared "morals, customs and above all... opinion[s]" had served to reconcile the General Will and the Will of All, (which is to say, citizens' conception of the common good and the collective conception of each person's own particular good had coincided to the extent that the community had shared a set of opinions that disposed its members to identify their particular good with the prosperity of the community). Thus, the Will of All roughly corresponded to the General Will, and for the most part, the General Will had been enlightened. But that public spirit progressively dissolved as Rome's conquests and its patrons made it rich; it is worth repeating that as Rousseau sees things, "luxury corrupts everything; the rich who enjoy it, and the wretched who covet it" (Obs: δ52). Not only would the philosopher's idyllic Republic be small, it would admit "little or no luxury; for luxury is either the effect of riches, or makes them necessary; it corrupts rich and poor alike, the one by possession, the other by covetousness; it sells out the fatherland to laxity, to vanity; it deprives the state of all its citizens by making them slaves to one another, and all of them slaves to opinion" (SC: 3.4.5). Indeed, in his *Considerations*, Rousseau goes so far as to declare: "nowhere will you find a great moral or political evil in which money is not involved" (CGP: 11.5).

Wealth and luxury are so pernicious to the polity, in Rousseau's estimation, because a citizen living in a feverish city can have a more immediate experience (or imagine a more immediate experience) of his own good than the polity's. Inasmuch as opulence intensifies the experience of one's own good, it is especially damaging due to its ability to raise a powerful alternative to the satisfaction of belonging to a larger polity and participating in its communal life. To make matters worse, the salutary and wholesome passions that once sustained the state—the exhilaration connected to contributing to the public good, and the honor the polity bestows upon the exemplars of public spirit—are further reduced as the polity itself comes to honor wealth and luxury primarily. As Rousseau puts it, "In all hearts there is naturally a reserve of great

passions; when the only one left is the passion for money, it is because all the others, which should have been stimulated and encouraged, have been enervated and stifled" (CGP: 11.4).

Stifled thus, public spiritedness cannot act as a meaningful check on the multitude that will always be drawn toward their particular good by that "malady" eternal to the souls of men. Man's second natural passion, his *amour propre*, must be enlisted to check his baser appetites. This can only be accomplished by "mak[ing] money contemptible and, if possible useless" (CGP: 11.2). For this reason, in his *Considerations*, Rousseau clearly articulates a vital requirement of any healthy polity—namely, that public honor be the citizens' primary reward and incentive for public service. In Poland, for instance, taxes *must* be paid not in gold or grain, but by men's labor (and it is worth noting that no man, no matter how rich or eminent, would be permitted to evade making his contribution). As such, all citizens would have the frequent experience of contributing of themselves to the beautification and the maintenance of their fatherland—a habit which, unsurprisingly, helps to engender civic pride and public spirit in men who (naturally preferring themselves because of their first passion: *amour de soi*), also become attached to the fruits of their labor.

Where a polity prospers as Rome did, however, where great riches are accumulated, their distribution inevitably becomes a divisive issue. The very passion that animates a polity's soldiers (all the more powerfully the better the soldier), and which, at the same time, can help men cultivate an impressive degree of indifference toward riches—their yearning for public honor where the polity honors the right things—is naturally sensitive to perceived injustice. It is not that promising young men like Tiberius Gracchus were unhappy at war's end because they had fought ostensibly to win and enjoy Carthage's riches and luxuries; they were unhappy because their being denied the very fruit of *their* military success and *their* many sacrifices was inevitably perceived as grossly unjust. Naturally, it led to indignation. The polity's honor-loving defenders felt that the state (especially its upper classes)—though fundamentally indebted to them—had through such gross injustice, dishonored their benefactors.

Thus it was that Romans—once soldiers and farmers—began to degenerate. Thus it was that the polity's ways and manners, its laws and its dogmas—*mores* and opinions

that had made Romans "the most virtuous people that ever was"—were slowly forgotten. Once upon a time the virtue of the Roman many had been its strength; to Rousseau, "the trouble the crowd sometimes caused may be judged by what happened at the time of the Gracchi, when a portion of the citizens cast its vote from the rooftops" (SC: 3.15.6). Individuals' particular interests and the Will of All was beginning to usurp the enlightened General Will.

Regardless of whether the accumulation of wealth, luxury, or leisure (and fancy ways to spend it) is the primary object of a man's desire, or whether he yearns for honor and victory primarily, once the social spirit has been enervated ever so slightly, men will begin breaking their fatherland's sacred laws in order to satisfy their own particular longings. And when citizens begin to imagine satisfying their longings—even the higher longings for honor and victory—outside the salutary rubric the state once provided, even the higher sort of men, those men Hobbes calls "children of pride", pose a massive political problem.

Here, Cicero is Rousseau's example. He successfully saved the Republic from the challenge Cataline presented, but his actions had less to do with his patriotism or his love for the fatherland and more to do with his love of himself. Cataline, an ambitious former soldier turned politician, rose to prominence and power on the support of the many poor to whom he promised the abolition of all debts (he amassed their support by appealing to their particular interests; cf. Rep: 565ea). Cicero, who declined to suggest that a dictator be established for fear his co-Consul would not appoint him, exceeded the bounds of Roman law by opposing Cataline forcibly, leaving most of his supporters dead. In Rousseau's estimation, "Cicero, though a Roman, loved his glory more than his fatherland, [and] sought not so much the most legitimate and certain way to save the State as the way to get all the honor in this affair. He was therefore justly honored as the liberator of Rome, and justly punished as a transgressor of the laws" (SC: 4.6.10).

The critical point is that by 64 BC, public spiritedness was no longer the "spring" responsible for energizing the Republic. Montesquieu underlines the problem by comparing Cato's exceptional Republican soul (the soul of a man Rousseau refers to in *Political Economy* as "a God among mortals") to Cicero's "often common" soul.

> I believe that if Cato had preserved himself for the republic, he would have given a completely different turn to events. Cicero's talents admirably suited him for a secondary role, but he was not fit for the main one. His genius was superb, but his soul was often common. With Cicero, virtue was the accessory, with Cato, glory. Cicero always thought of himself first, Cato always forgot about himself. The latter wanted to save the republic for its own sake, the former in order to boast of it.
> I could continue the comparison by saying that when Cato foresaw, Cicero feared, that where Cato hoped, Cicero was confident, that the former always saw things dispassionately, the latter through a hundred petty passions (CRGD: ch. 12).

When the time comes that the social spirit has not the (moral) force required to ensure compliance to a polity's laws, the government's role necessarily increases. For as Rousseau explains time and time again, one cannot count on even a man as good as Cicero rising to the helm of the state, for where particular interest is allowed to manifest itself, the Prince will most often perceive that its own advantage lies in usurping the legislative authority. In short, where public spiritedness no longer reigns, the Prince will almost always be much worse than a man driven to "save the state in order to boast of it". Instead, he will be tempted to ruin the state in order to profit from it. To make matters worse, in such a state, the multitude are motivated by an equally low disposition; as a result, they will no longer obey the laws out of a love for their fatherland, nor even out of habit.

Since it would be sheer folly to count on the multitude's reason—indeed, once the public spirit is enervated, reason is usually recruited to serve the lower passions—what cannot be accomplished through *higher* passion can only be accomplished through force, which is to say the state's ability to inspire fear in its composing constituents. But as Montesquieu had argued only a few decades before the publication of the *Social Contract*, "there is nothing so powerful as a republic in which the laws are observed not through fear, not through reason, but through passion—which was the case in Rome and Lacedaemon" (CRGD: ch. 4). A number of problems emerge where that passion—sustained by the convictions, opinions, and beliefs that had once inculcated a deeply ingrained love of fatherland and public spirit—is no longer possible. To begin with, instead of a powerful republic, powerful government must emerge. In Rousseau's

words, "the smaller the ratio of individual wills to the general will, that is to say of morals to the laws, the more does the repressive force have to increase" (SC: 3.1.13). For a government that is, so to speak, *forced* to "enforce" its laws is of necessity a more powerful government. As a result, its abuses pose a graver danger to the body politic, and thus, to the possibility of civil and political freedom.

For if the purpose of government is the "maintenance of freedom, both civil and political", Rousseau is surely right that "the mainspring of public authority is in the hearts of its citizens, and that nothing can replace morals in sustaining government" (SC: 3.1.5; PE: δ26). The philosopher goes on to explain why good arms and good laws alone are not sufficient to sustain the government and the state:

> Not only are none but good people capable of administering the laws, but basically none but honest people are capable of obeying them...regardless of the precautions that may be taken, those who are only waiting for impunity to do evil will scarcely lack the means of eluding the law or escaping the penalty. Then, once all particular interests unite against the general interest which is no longer that of anyone, public vices have greater force to enervate the laws than the laws have to repress the vices; and the corruption of the people and the chiefs finally spreads to the government, however wise it may be: the worst of all abuses is to obey the laws in appearance only to break them safely in fact (PE: δ26).

Stated concisely, once the people is corrupted and sees no inherent interest in obeying the laws where they can imagine profiting by breaking them, their chiefs will very soon come to share the same terrible disposition. Government magistrates come from the people, and where the government must use repressive force to contain the populace, it cannot help but deteriorate as it guides the public force not according to the General Will, but increasingly, according to the government's corporate will, or the Prince's particular will. Thus, the people and their magistrates succumb to the ailment together. It can justifiably be said of both the people and their magistrates that "as soon as all one wants is to profit, one invariably profits more by being a knave than by being an honest man", which inevitably makes for ugly politics (CGP: 11.3).

While the magistrates consolidate power in government such that they can contain the people (which at the same time makes it easier and more tempting to employ public authority for private ends), the body politic naturally grows weaker. Sooner more often

than later, the people will surrender whatever remained of the unity which public-spirit might once have provided them—this because the people become increasingly divided into factions, usually along economic divisions—and as a result, as a *people*, they will eventually lack the courage, the strength, the fortitude, and the will to oppose the Prince as government contracts, usurps the sovereign power, breaks the social pact, and becomes tyrannical. True, arrived at this point, ordinary citizens will be restored to their natural freedom, and thus only forced—but never morally obligated—to obey government magistrates. Yet as long as the Prince wields the public force (especially where he has the technological fruit of modern science to augment his repressive capacity), the government will always have the advantage, revolution will be difficult if not impossible, and both civil and political freedom will rapidly fade from memory.

Once public spiritedness has dissolved in favor of the Prince's and the citizens' particular interests, as Rousseau has underlined over and over again, all is lost. The sort of revolution that gave rise to Lycurgus' Sparta and Numa's Rome are exceedingly rare and "a people can free itself as long as it is merely barbarous, but it can no longer do so once the civil mainspring is worn out"(SC: 2.9.4).

Poland's Temporary Exceptionalism

Poland's advantage over Europe arises from the fact that it has not yet been entirely *civilized*; Europe's *mores* have not yet penetrated all the country's citizens and so the civil mainspring is not yet worn-out irreparably. Beyond that, Poland's situation is a uniquely fortunate one in that, because of the country's tumultuous political history, government has not yet usurped the sovereign authority.

Turning to Poland's *mores* first, then, it is not that Rousseau's Poles are not subject to that "eternal malady" responsible for withering the souls of the European multitude. On the contrary, even though the Polish heart, like all mortal hearts, "is such that it clings to personal privilege more than to the greater and more general advantages", the lone remedy for the condition is still viable in Poland, whereas long ago Europeans reached the point "where everything is venal and rotten to the core", the point at which "it is in vain that it seeks to reform its laws and to preserve its freedom" (CGP: 9.4,13.8). For according to Rousseau, "only a patriotism enlightened by experience can learn to

sacrifice for the sake of greater goods a brilliant right grown pernicious through abuse, and henceforth inseparable from that abuse" (CGP: 9.4).

The Poles are still resilient, then, still capable of acquiring that "vigor of soul" which animated and where properly channeled, ostensibly defined the ancients. If we assume, for the moment, that Rousseau believes his project could be realized, it is possible to interpret him as the genius Lawgiver guided by an ancient spirit who might give the yet-malleable Poles laws and institutions capable of successfully "chang[ing] human nature". His suggested reforms can be perceived as an attempt to make demi-gods out of men, an attempt to "weaken[] man's constitution in order to strengthen it" (SC: 2.7.3). His project aims to attach the citizens to the fatherland and to one another to the exclusion of wealth, luxury, and their particular interests.

If all this is possible, it is possible because the "Polish nation is different in nature, in government, in morals, in language, not only from its neighbors, but from all the rest of Europe" (CGP: 12.3). And when it comes to the state of their souls, it may be the case that one of the fundamental differences between the Poles and the Europeans is the role and condition of the bourgeoisie.

Whereas in Europe it would not be an overstatement to assert that the *bourgeois are everything*, on Rousseau's account a bad thing ("[a]lways in contradiction with himself, always floating between his desires and his duties, [the European] will never be either man or citizen. He will be good neither for himself nor for others. He will be one of the men of our age: a Frenchman, an Englishman, a bourgeois. He will be nothing"), in Poland, the nobles "are everything" and the bourgeois "are nothing" (Emile: p.40; cf. SC: 1.6.10*n*). Bearing in mind the importance Rousseau attaches to the objects of a polity's esteem ("it is useless to draw a distinction between a nation's morals and the objects of its esteem"), and the fact that the knightly order *is everything* in Poland, the result is that the knightly order effectively determines everything that is honored—a point to be emphasized and reemphasized.

Obviously, what in particular is honored differs from regime to regime, from century to century. Every nation establishes its own set of opinions "about what one ought to praise or blame." As a result, and as Alexis de Tocqueville so clearly articulates, the particular rules adopted "always have their source in the special habits of

the association" (DA: p.593). Feudal aristocracy, for instance, "was born of war and for war; it had found power in arms and maintained it by arms; nothing therefore was more necessary to it than military courage; and it is natural that it glorified that above all the rest. All that manifested this outwardly, even at the expense of reason and humanity, was therefore approved and often commended by it" (DA: p.591). In other words, since military courage and marshal valor were most important to sustaining the regime, these attributes were honored and glorified above all others—even above wisdom and humanity. This was the case during the Middle-Ages in Europe (to say nothing of Sparta and Rome) and it seems to be an accurate depiction of the Poland Rousseau describes, or at least its knightly order.

As the level of trade and commerce increased in Europe, however, polities found their power elsewhere, and as a result, the very objects of their esteem were naturally affected; in fact, it could not have been otherwise. Eventually, as political economy (in its broader sense) became more important, a nation's force was no longer connected exclusively of the number of courageous warriors it could field, but rather to its numbers simply—the number of merchants, the number of producers, the number of bourgeois. As the liberal democracies slowly emerged, people were no longer partitioned into castes, various segments of society no longer harbored separate interests (nor an inherent interest in distinguishing themselves), and as a result, there were fewer prescriptions regarding what was honorable and those prescriptions tended to be less precise. Tocqueville presents his analysis in reference to the American democracy—albeit one distinguished by the fact it 'sprung-up fully grown'—but his evaluation is likely germane to all emerging liberal democracies.

> Warlike valor is little prized; the courage that is best known and most esteemed is that which makes one brave the furies of the ocean to arrive sooner in port, to tolerate without complaint the miseries of the wilderness, and the solitude, more cruel than all its miseries; the courage that renders one almost insensitive to the sudden reversal of a painfully acquired fortune and immediately prompts new efforts to construct a new one. Courage of this kind is necessary to the maintenance and prosperity of the American association, and it is particularly honored and glorified by it. One cannot show oneself to be lacking it without dishonor (DA: p.595).

It is important to note that what actually sustains a regime must coincide with what the regime honors—if, that is, the regime is to survive. However, if there are deeds and attributes that are *naturally* honorable—as Rousseau implies there may be through his example of the duel in the chapter on the Censorship (the same example Hobbes uses to establish the honor or nobility intrinsic to courage and strength: "for there be some things made honorable by nature: as the effects of courage, magnanimity, strength, wisdom, and other abilities of body and mind")—different regimes will promote what is honorable by nature only to the extent that these are what sustains a particular regime (SC: 4.7.6; Lev: 2.28.18). In other words, where commerce and industry are politically necessary for the survival of the regime, it is inevitable that baser things be honored in order to compete with one's neighbors. For example, where a polity's neighbor grows rich due to its commercial or military exploits and uses those proceeds to establish a formidable navy, adopting the same strategy is often *politically* necessary, irrespective of the consequences for men's virtue. As Rousseau might put it, money, not virtue, becomes the highest object of esteem, and the polity is lost, at least in terms of the number of virtuous men it produces. If the polity had *not* turned its attention to commerce and industry, however, the polity itself would have been lost—in that case, from without as opposed to from within (one further implication of which will be discussed later).

That the knightly order, and not the bourgeois, *are everything* in Poland explains why Rousseau can attribute a "noble pride" to the Poles. What power the nation can claim is a result of those attributes the body politic honors—and in that, the Poles are much closer to ancients than they are to the Europeans. However, Rousseau's plan for the rejuvenation of Poland requires that the Polish bourgeoisie play a larger role in the activities of the state, and so it is imperative that some among this bourgeois class be *ennobled*. As this occurs, however, it is also imperative that the bourgeoisie refrain from adopting the standards that caused the irreversible decline in Europe.

Rousseau is well aware of how important it will be to supervise the emerging bourgeoisie so as to ensure that Poland continues to honor the proper attributes and excellences. He lauds the Spartan, who, amidst the voluptuous pleasures of the Court of a great king, missed his fatherland's characteristic but simple pleasures (in this case, his

black broth). It is in this image that Rousseau would have his Poles nurtured. Gambling, theatres, comedies, opera, "all that makes men effeminate, all that distracts them, all that makes them forget their fatherland and their duty, all that makes them comfortable anywhere at all so long as they are entertained"—all this must be eliminated; or at least, such activities must be discouraged by treating all those who indulge in such enervating pleasures with public ignominy (CGP: 3.8).

And so above all, the love of wealth that animates European hearts and permits the idleness that promotes their debauchery, must be guarded against. In essence, Rousseau endeavors to "drain the force of riches". For according to the philosopher, "In a word, money is at once the weakest and the most ineffectual spring I know to get the political machine to move to its end, and the strongest and most certain to deflect it from it" (CGP: 11.3). It is *disparities* of fortune, though, that are a (perhaps *the*) "major obstacle". For it is only natural that "the object of public admiration will invariably be the object of the wishes of individuals, and if one has to be rich in order to shine then being rich will always be the dominant passion" (CGP: 4.12). Rousseau prefers the ancient disposition, but he admits that "eliminating all luxury where inequality reigns... does strike [him] as an extremely difficult undertaking". Nevertheless, he inquires (and perhaps it remains an open question), whether there might be some way "to change the objects of this luxury, and so render its example less pernicious?" (CGP: 4.13).

Not long afterward he proposes one answer. "[Luxury] has to be extirpated from the depth of men's hearts by impressing healthier and nobler tastes on them. Prohibiting the things people ought not to do is a clumsy and vain thing to do unless one begins by making these things hated and scorned..." (CGP: 4.14). But on the positive side, something must supplant their place in men's hearts. The chapter on education follows his answer directly, and there, Rousseau proposes distinctive games, distinctive ceremonies, distinctive festivals, distinctive modes of dress, and other ways and manners that would have contributed to a Polish national individuality. Perhaps most importantly, however, the philosopher reemphasizes one of his first emphatic points: the importance of a gymnastic education. "How, then, can one move hearts, and get the fatherland and its laws loved?" Rousseau had earlier inquired. "Dare I say it? with children's games", is the response he expands upon here (CGP: 1.7). Children's gymnastic education,

> this much neglected issue, is, in my view, the most important part of education, not only because it forms sturdy and healthy temperaments, but even more because of its moral objective, which either gets neglected or is met by a lot of pedantic and vain precepts that are so much empty talk. I cannot repeat often enough that good education has to be negative. Prevent vices from arising, you will have done enough for virtue. The way to do this in a good public education is simplicity itself (CGP: 4.4).

Rousseau's emphasis in his *Considerations* on the importance of athletics and physical exercise in the education of the young may well be designed to prevent (to some extent, at least) the *slackening* that has occurred in Europe. By advocating and honoring activities where honor is bestowed upon those who can be shown to be *more naturally* superior (in that it is much more difficult to deceive one's fellows in exploits of the body, such as require strength and courage, than in arts founded on words and other talents), it may be possible to inculcate an appreciation for what is honorable by nature. As we have seen, modern standards of honor and dishonor, by contrast, fail to encourage *natural* human excellence inasmuch as comparisons become more difficult as a society becomes more complex. Perhaps it is because Rousseau's Europe (the one we inherited) is a commercial republic that money becomes the de facto common denominator. The inherent difficulty, of course, is that the distribution of goods has little to do with natural inequalities—those qualities and attributes that are excellent by nature—once the polity is established. And as a result, what the polity honors no longer encourages either natural or civic virtue. Instead, it tends to encourage the worst in men.

In the preface to *Narcissus*, Rousseau suggests a correlation between business and bad *mores*.

> I believe that men's morals can be very accurately gauged by how much business they have with one another: the more dealings they have, the more they admire their talents and their industry, the more decorously and cunningly are they villains, and the more contemptible they are (PN: 30*n*).

As Rousseau had argued in his *First Discourse*, making boys handsome and healthy in body is the first requisite of making them into virtuous men. In Poland, by inculcating a preference for *more natural* sorts of honor and virtue, men might actually be, to some

extent, inoculated against the charms of wealth and luxury through their gymnastic education.

Later on in the work, Rousseau goes so far as to argue that "nothing is easier" than to make military skill a point of honor in a republic. That a proper gymnastic education is importantly, and perhaps inevitably, connected to training for war, has important implications insofar as serious training for war often promotes success in war (a point to which I shall shortly return). To begin with, however, Rousseau is well aware that maintaining such standards where men, ever-susceptible to that 'eternal malady', are tempted by baser charms, it will always be necessary to zealously guard the polity's education. And so the public aspect of political life and the requirement that its ways and manners be exclusive to Poland is emphasized in Rousseau's *Considerations*. Children's games, the polity's festivals—all are to occur "together in public", the ultimate result of which leaves citizens "living under the eyes of their fellow-citizens and...seeking public approbation" (CGP: 4.5). One recalls *Republic*'s "city in speech" in this connection. More than once, the importance of limiting the privacy available to honor-loving men such that those pleasures privacy permits cannot acquire the opportunity to rival their taste for the esteem of the public is emphasized. "Since it is on these institutions that the hope of the republic, the glory and fate of the nation depend," Rousseau professes his surprise that "it has not occurred to anyone anywhere else to attribute [such importance] to them" (CGP: 4.7).

It certainly has not occurred to the French; Rousseau underlines the importance of all things national for the Poles, and among them national dress, making a special point of criticizing those he was living among: "let no Pole dare show himself at Court dressed in French fashion" (one suspects Rousseau's caution is especially emphatic here; CGP: 3.7). Similarly, in addition to drawing the guardians of the polity's education from among its best men—those adorned with silver plaques—Rousseau stipulates that all teachers must be Poles (CGP: 4.2; 13.6). In this connection, one recalls what Claire, visiting Geneva, writes to Julie regarding Paris' pernicious cosmopolitan spirit in *Julie*: "Oh your France, your France! It poisons and corrupts all its neighbors. It has more than one manner of making conquests, and its armies are less to be feared than its *mores*" (Julie: 6.5 var. *e*; cf. Melzer: p. 275).

Rousseau repeats this caution in his *Considerations*, and it may be the case that of all his councils, this one is among the most important. A great nation must have civil and domestic practices of its own, a "national philosophy", as it were, and to maintain them, it must "never mingle much with its neighbors", and guard against being "daily bastardized by the general European tendency to be bastardized by the tastes and morals of the French" (CGP: 3.7). Once again, the importance of what Strauss refers to as a "national individuality" and the pernicious effects of cosmopolitan influences—the spread of luxury, for certain, but also the practice of philosophy which attempts to replace a polity's particular opinions with knowledge, thereby undermining what buttresses the state—are manifest. Insofar as an inevitable consequence of the advancement of the arts and sciences, cosmopolitan by their very nature, is that "national hatreds will die out, but so will love of country," creating the Poles Rousseau imagines seems to require an important degree of political isolation. But before one considers how it is that modernity presents an important obstacle to meeting this requirement, one must return to considering Polish exceptionalism with regard to the executive's natural tendency to usurp legislative authority.

Here Rousseau is absolutely categorical in his assertion that Poland's situation is unique in comparison to Europe's. For in Poland alone, the legislative and executive powers have always remained divided. Moreover, since the executive power was both divided and by tradition passed from one individual to another not related to him, the powers,

> since they balanced one another and were not perpetuated in the same families, did not concentrate absolute force in them; and all power, even when usurped, always returned to its source. Things would not have been the same if the entire executive power had resided either in a single body such as the Senate, or in a single family through inheritance of the crown. This family or this body would probably sooner or later have oppressed the legislative power and thus placed the Poles under the yoke which all nations bear; and of which the Poles alone are still free (CGP: 7.5).

In other words, since successors to the throne were always newly elected, the new king was constantly forced "to move backward instead of forward"; always constrained, to "start out at the same point" at the moment of his election. As a result, "in spite of the

habitual slope toward despotism, there was no real progress made [in that direction]" (CGP: 7.4). In essence, Poland is free because in the intervals between kings, the people are restored all their rights and privileges, which permits the renewal of their public vigor and initial resilience. At the same time, what Rousseau refers to as "the continual presence of the lawgiver", or more concretely, the frequency of the Diets and the frequent reelection (thus, the frequent renewal) of the Deputies, has helped prevent the contraction, and corruption of government.

Given Rousseau's conviction that the executive inevitably tends to usurp the sovereign authority, Poland's apparent immunity to such calamity must be accounted for. The country's current condition (or in Rousseau's words, "that the vast expanse of Poland has not already a hundred times converted its government into a despotism, bastardized the Poles' souls, and corrupted the mass of the nation") is utterly astonishing to the philosopher. Indeed, the Polish situation is so remarkable that Rousseau declares it to be "unique in history" (CGP: 5.1). He attributes Poland's fortune—that "this progression" is only in its infancy—to the fact that after "many centuries", the country is still only at the stage of anarchy. And so, he "cannot repeat too often" to those who would consider reforming Poland's constitution, that they must beware of altering what has prevented the nation from succumbing to Europe's disease in these last centuries.

It is not that Poland's government is upright or properly constituted—indeed, on Rousseau's account, it too has suffered the "weakening of legislation". Unlike Europe's weakening, however, the catalyst for such weakening in the Polish case was not the subjugation of the sovereign authority by the legislative authority. True, the legislative branch is without force, but what distinguishes Poland is that the public body "still retains its full authority". Although currently inactive, and while nothing obeys it, what is perhaps more important, nothing dominates the sovereign authority.

That the advancement of the arts and sciences has not progressed in Poland to the extent it has progressed in Europe may, in the final analysis, be the main reason for Polish exceptionalism. Time and time again Poland was "depopulated", "devastated", and "oppressed"; in a word, it has (and has benefited from) a long history of political instability. This is so important because where political stability is not entrenched, natural excellences—strength, courage, intelligence—remain honorable because they

remain so useful in times of uncertainty (more valuable than silver or gold for both individuals and for the state). Moreover, amidst political instability, it is far more difficult to accumulate, to protect, and to enjoy riches. The result: luxuries are limited because the fruits and means of industry are uncertain. Without concentrated wealth and luxury, polity-withering fine art and the popularization of learning and philosophy are also impossible for lack of leisure. In short, the fruits of modernity—and in particular, of modern science—have not yet enervated Polish souls, an advantage for which they must thank their tumultuous political history.

They remained vigorous because circumstance had prevented their enjoying an "imaginary" version of the repose for which all human beings long. The Poles, like the French and the Germans "sigh for tranquility", it is only too true. Post-Hobbes, Rousseau is right to "believe it very easy to attain." But he is also correct to note that "to preserve it together with freedom, that seems... difficult. The patriotic souls that protected [the Poles] against the yoke [of servitude] were formed in the midst of the anarchy [the Poles] find so hateful" (CGP: 1.3). Nonetheless, it explains why they remain capable of higher freedoms. Though they are, in truth, better off than any of Europe's peoples, the Poles long for the "imaginary repose" of the European bourgeois.

Due to their semi-barbaric nature—albeit, one retained against their wills—the Poles were left reasonably well-suited, or at least not ill-suited, to wield the Sovereign authority in the frequent intervals that occurred when the Prince changed.[22] Therefore, the critical question becomes: will the Poles find a Lawgiver capable of transforming them into citizens, capable of making them prefer the simple life and wholesome pleasures of a patriot and a citizen to the "imaginary repose" of a typical bourgeois European? Or will they "reform" themselves in Europe's seductive image?

War and Commerce

In a world as culturally integrated, even as homogenized, as Europe was becoming while Rousseau wrote, the necessary question to ask regarding the practicality

[22] What is more, the fact that the sciences and the arts had not yet taken hold of Poland necessarily constrained Polish princes inasmuch as the highest rewards they could have hoped for had to do with the honor, allegiance, and esteem of the knightly order, and not the riches, luxuries, leisure, and ostentation that animated the typical European court.

of Rousseau's reforms, was whether or not Poland could continue to isolate itself from the effects of the arts and sciences. That Poland managed to elude Europe's fate as long as it did is basically attributable to fortunate circumstance. Rousseau recognizes that preventing degeneration in the future would be more difficult, however. Indeed, he seems to suggest that the revolution sweeping Europe may have been an irresistible one.

A historical analogy may be useful here. It is well known that Sparta went to great lengths to prevent the intrusion of cosmopolitan influences, going so far as to prohibit sophists' entry to their territory; and as long as it succeeded in this, it managed to guard the nurture that made its citizens Spartans (FD: δ24). When the Peloponnesian War ended with Athens' final defeat in 404BC, though, Sparta was thrust into the awkward position of superpower, and was compelled by political necessity to lead a loose confederation of heterogeneous city-states scattered across all of Greece. Sparta realized that every polity had its own corporate interest—particular interests that did not always coincide with the common interest, and that posed a limit to what cooperation could accomplish. Just as earlier Athens had resorted to coercion, so did Sparta: it interfered with domestic politics here, it extorted tribute brutally there.

Its superpower status ended shortly after it had been attained; Sparta's fleet was defeated by the Persians, and in 371, the Thebans defeated the once-mighty Spartan army, dispelling the myth its warriors were invincible. Rousseau would not have been surprised. *Leading* (and subjugating) Greece required extensive travel—both military and diplomatic. Consequently, cosmopolitanism increased; commerce increased. Wealth, luxury and political inequality emerged at hitherto unprecedented rates. Land changed hands as prolonged warfare depopulated the countryside just as it would later in Rome. Spartans were softened even as they became exhausted—its military spirit was reduced, and so was Sparta. Rousseau noted that the great war "represented especially on the Lacedaemonians's part, a violation of the maxims of their wise Lawgiver." In the end, Sparta was victorious, but the Peloponnesian War "ruined Greece", according to the philosopher (LR: δ42).

Unlike Sparta, Poland did not go to great lengths to keep luxury and cosmopolitan influences out; instead, the main reason Poland remained vigorous as long as it did was that it was surrounded by warlike neighbors. The fact that "Poland is

surrounded by warlike powers with large, perfectly disciplined, permanent standing armies, to which Poland could not, even with the utmost efforts, ever oppose similar forces without soon exhausting itself"; the fact that its neighbors, intent on preventing "it from doing so, would promptly crush [Poland] before it could carry out its project"; and the fact that "no matter what is done, Poland will be overwhelmed by its enemies a hundred times before it can be given everything it needs in order to resist them"—are the precisely the reasons why the arts and sciences did not advance in Poland. Due to circumstance, then, the peace and stability Hobbes' political science envisioned remained illusory in Poland. What is more, Poland could never have set about conquering, much less entertained notions of establishing an empire (CGP: 12.2, 3.1).

That this attribute was an important one—one of several that kept Poland from submitting to the malady plaguing Europe—is confirmed by the lengths to which Rousseau has gone to ensure that his Poland, if it were possible to bring it to fruition, would never seek empire (nor even secure its border against its expansionist neighbors). According to the Lawgiver, "It would be an even greater [chimera] to try to make conquests and to acquire offensive force; it is incompatible with your form of government. Whoever wants to remain free ought not to want to be a conqueror" (CGP: 12.3). As Roger Masters points out, the five defeated civilizations Rousseau cites in the *First Part* of the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* share an important characteristic. All were polities that enlarged themselves and satisfied their always-intensifying lust for riches, luxuries, and leisure, by pursuing Empire, and all were examples of decadent and opulent peoples who therefore grew soft only to be defeated and conquered by poor and primitive neighbors (Masters: p. 219). This historical induction is confirmed by the Roman example. As Rome discovered, conquest is ultimately inimical to freedom, or as Rousseau puts it, "whoever dares to deprive others of their freedom almost always ends up by losing his own" (CGP: 12.9). This seems to be true for a number of reasons.

Both Montesquieu and Rousseau note that one of the causes of Rome's decline emerged directly from its military. As Rome expanded, its armies were forced to travel further and longer. Soldiers were no longer citizens first; they "began to recognize no one but their general, to base all their hopes on him, and to feel more remote from the city. They were no longer the soldiers of the republic, but those of Sulla, Marius,

Pompey, and Caesar. Rome could no longer know if the man at the head of an army was its general or its enemy" (CRGD: p.9). Rousseau is well aware of the dangers professional soldiers, or a standing army, can pose to a polity. They can become an instrument of oppression—the means of making government more powerful—and worse yet, in decadent times they often breed potential usurpers. Whereas a citizen army tends to empower the people and provide citizens with an invaluable gymnastic education, the philosopher goes so far as to declare that with, and "*only* with regular and standing troops can the executive power ever enslave the state" (My Emphasis; CGP: 12.9). The problem, of course, is that where training for war is an indispensable part of the polity's education, there must be wars to fight. The early Romans, at war more often than not, were, not surprisingly, very successful. Thus, as it defeated its enemies, the Republic accumulated territory, and eventually—inevitably, perhaps—became an empire, the most famous in human history: the Roman Empire. It is a realization that informs Rousseau's military advice for Poland: "The Roman republic was destroyed by its legions when the remoteness of its conquests forced it always to have some on active footing. Once again, the Poles should not look about them with a view to imitating even the good that is done elsewhere… They should exclusively do what suits them and not what others do" (CGP: 12.5).

Ironically, Rousseau would have the Poles "establish in Poland a genuine militia exactly as it is established in Switzerland where every inhabitant is a soldier, but only when he has to be one" (CGP: 12.6). The larger problem with Rousseau's treatment of "The Military System", however, is that he glosses over a revolution in warfare brought about by the very arts and sciences he understands so well. Aside from a single mention of artillery ("do not bankrupt yourselves with artillery"), the chapter could easily be referring to armies of antiquity—indeed, Rousseau's examples throughout the section are deliberately classical (CGP: 13.12). Consequently, he would have Poland rely almost entirely on the cavalry and "place the entire fate of the war in its hands" (CGP: 13.10). While this may be an effective way to encourage marshal valor, it is not an effective way to win battles—or even to survive them in the age of gunpowder.

Montesquieu's Rhedi might as well have written to Rousseau. Then again, Rousseau would not have learned anything he did not already understand as clearly as

anyone. To his friend in Paris, Rhedi writes: "You are well aware that since the invention of gunpowder no fort is impregnable: which means, Usbek, that there is no asylum on earth against injustice and violence" (PL: letter 105). Rousseau certainly recognizes as much. Early in his *Considerations*, he makes the interesting point that "Homer's heroes all distinguished themselves by their force and skill... The Knight's tournaments trained men who were not only stout and courageous, but also eager for honor and glory, and fit for all the virtues. The use of firearms, by making bodily faculties less useful in war, has caused them to fall into discredit..." (CGP: 3.10). Similarly, the only indication in the *First Discourse* that Rousseau is aware of a revolution in warfare that had affected what martial virtue could accomplish—and therefore, what the state ought to inculcate in modern soldiers—is subtly, but effectively, couched in terms of what the era of gunpowder means for a soldier's courage: "A man who runs intrepidly into the line of fire is nonetheless a very bad officer. Even in the soldier, a little more strength and vigor would perhaps be more necessary than such bravery, which does not preserve him from death" (FD: δ51). What Rousseau quietly and reluctantly notes is that in the era of gunpowder, a solider's bravery, strength and vigor means less than ever before because they are less "useful" than ever before. As Rousseau goes on to note, because of artillery, naval charts and compasses, it is no longer true that victory in war "proves the Conquerors' valor"; in fact, "[a]ll it proves is their cunning and their skill; it proves that an adroit and clever man can owe to his industry the success which a brave man expects from his valor alone" (Obs: δ61).

This represents a truly massive problem, both morally and poltically, in that a brave general leading the bravest of soldiers can no longer expect success from "valor alone" where his opponents are "clever" and "industr[ious]" princes, armed with the advantages modern scientific technology can provide. Rousseau's reforms require that martial valor remain "useful" in war because war is so vital a part of a curriculum that emphasizes gymnastic education, indeed, because training for war is so vital to cultivating the Poles he imagines. However, the military fruits of modern science are a major impediment to his project insofar as it is impossible to prevent other powers (bent on expanding and enriching themselves) from developing and using weaponry of tremendous destructive capacity at the cost of encouraging virtue through martial valor

and military training (on both sides). What is more, insofar as Rousseau was well acquainted with the modern scientific project, he no doubt appreciated that the invention of gunpowder marked only the *beginning* of a revolution in warfare that would radically transform relations between states. Montesquieu, clearly one of Rousseau's most important teachers, has his Rhedi express a chillingly prescient concern, one which Rousseau no doubt considered carefully. In a letter pertaining ostensibly to the development of the sciences, the more genuinely philosophic Rhedi remarks to the more sophisticated than philosophic Usbek, "I am always afraid that they will eventually succeed in discovering some secret which will provide a quicker way of making men die, and exterminate whole countries and nations" (PL: letter 105). Usbek's response is characteristically (and hopelessly) naive.

> You say that you are afraid of the discovery of some method of destruction that is crueler than those which are now used. No; if such a fateful invention came to be discovered, it would soon be banned by international law; by the unanimous consent of every country the discovery would be buried. It is not in the interest of rulers to make conquests by such means; they ought to look for subjects, not territory (PL: letter 106).

Usbek was wrong, of course, and Rhedi was right. Thus, Poland is left with two options, neither of which was particularly desirable: either play by Europe's rules or be conquered by Germany, a decadent and degenerate European power (or else by Russia, a country trying to become a decadent and degenerate European power; SC: 2.8.5). Neither contributes to the realization of Rousseau's stated objective.

In the first place, if Poland could compete, conquest permits and thereby promotes luxury; short of convincing the warrior class that they will dissolve if they touch gold or silver (by teaching them, say, that their souls are endowed with an incompatible species of the same metals) acquiring the goods, and the territory, even the labor force of the vanquished, is an inescapable result of defeating opulent enemies. What may be even worse, it is not only the upper class at home that experiences the luxury plunder permits, for the warriors doing the actual plundering cannot be prevented from experiencing great excess, from imagining great wealth. As a result, a polity's soldiers are eventually de-spirited in favor of devoting themselves to their particular interests, as Tiberius Gracchus

and Cataline were in Rome. What is more, military success enriches the state, and therefore, increases economic disparities within it. This, of course, leads to faction between classes and the further erosion of public spirit. Rousseau's declaration that "as soon as someone says about affairs of state *What do I care?* the state has to be considered lost," is a rhetorical exaggeration, but it well expresses the essential point (SC: 3.15.3). And once that "eternal malady" is allowed to fester even this much, it is not long before citizens generally prefer becoming rich to becoming virtuous, at which point, all *is* lost.

It may be that "the Romans were [conquerors] by necessity and, so to speak, in spite of themselves," but once Romans tasted and became dependent on the tribute their patrons provided them and the spoils of war, they ceased to be Romans in the original mould, inasmuch as many of them turned their passions (and thus, their energies) away from the fatherland and toward all that they could personally accumulate (CGP: 12.3).

Success perpetuates the problem in another way inasmuch as conquered peoples bring opinions, beliefs, and convictions of their own to the polity that swallows them—opinions, beliefs, and convictions that, due to the very nature of religious conviction especially, cannot easily be annihilated without annihilating all those who hold them. This becomes a pressing problem in cases where the conquering polity requires the enthusiastic support of its colonies for the sake of its own survival. Montesquieu articulates the problem particularly clearly as Rome experienced it in a chapter entitled *Two Causes of Rome's Ruin.*

> Rome had subjugated the whole world with the help of the peoples of Italy, to whom it had at different times given various privileges. At first most of these peoples did not care very much about the right of Roman citizenship, and some preferred to keep their customs. But when this right meant universal sovereignty, and a man was nothing in the world if he was not a Roman citizen and everything if he was, the peoples of Italy resolved to perish or become Romans. Unable to succeed by their intrigues and entreaties, they took the path of arms. They revolted all along the coast of the Ionian sea; the other allies started to follow them. Forced to fight against those who were, so to speak, the hands with which it enslaved the world, Rome was lost. It was going to be reduced to its walls; it therefore accorded the coveted right of citizenship to the allies who had not yet ceased being loyal, and gradually to all. After this, Rome was no longer a city whose people had but a single spirit, a single love of liberty, a single hatred of tyranny—a city where the jealousy of the

> senate's power and the prerogatives of the great, always mixed with respect, was only a love of equality. Once the peoples of Italy became its citizens, each brought to Rome its genius, its particular interests, and its dependence on some great protector. The distracted city no longer formed a complete whole. And since citizens were such only by a kind of fiction, since they no longer had the same magistrates, the same walls, the same gods, the same temples, and the same graves, they no longer saw Rome with the same eyes, no longer had the same love of country, and Roman sentiments were no more (CRGD: ch.9).

In short, where polities must adopt assimilationist policies in order to protect themselves from formidable enemies—or be reduced to the city's walls, even destroyed—the social spirit cannot be maintained in the face of the welter of opinions, beliefs and convictions that are necessarily introduced with the reliance on those who help the polity secure itself. In turn, the outsiders who assist the polity—in Rome's case, "the peoples of Italy"—regard themselves as belonging to a "pluralistic" polity. Before long, what once made the polity great is undermined from within for the sake of overcoming threats from without.

So long as Poland remained in the throes of anarchy, "depopulated", "without economic organization", without military discipline, without order, "ever divided within", "ever threatened from without", "without stability of its own", "almost completely incapable of defending itself", and completely "dependent on its neighbors' whim", the difficulties that had continuously eroded Rome's exceptionalism, ultimately to ruin the Republic, were not real threats to Poland. But once the polity imagines stability and security, it necessarily risks befalling a similar fate (CGP: 3.1). The existence of anarchical regions may have been possible in a world of city-states, but in a world changed forever by the emergence of massive and often expansionist nation-states, the strong have strength enough to help themselves to the territory of the weak. Modern science only facilitates this, and as Rousseau quietly recognizes, "the most inviolable law of nature is the law of the stronger" (CGP: 12.3). That Poland was weak, and its neighbors strong—but not yet as strong as they would soon become as military technology continued its unimpeded advance—explains why Poland's situation, that

"after many centuries" it is still "only in [the stage of] anarchy", is "unique in history" (CGP: 5.1). But could it have been maintained?

In order to maintain all the advantages of that small idyllic Republic Rousseau seems to prefer within a world of gigantic nation-states, he proposes what strikes him "as a masterpiece of politics". Each of Poland's thirty-three provinces would essentially remain a sovereign unit—small enough to have and maintain wholesome *mores*—but for the sake of their common defense, the larger nation would rely on their combined strength.

Rousseau is well aware that "without the Confederations, the Republic of Poland would long ago have ceased to exist", and so he realizes they will continue to play a key role if his smaller republics are to preserve themselves (CGP: 10.14). "Confederations are the shield, the refuge, the sanctuary of this constitution," he observes (CGP: 10.16). That Poland endeavor to perfect the system of federative government in order to combine the advantages of small republics and large states is, perhaps, Rousseau's most important (though woefully underdeveloped) counsel. Nonetheless, "If you ignore this advice", the philosopher warns, "I doubt you can ever do a good job" (CGP: 5.2). That he attempts to limit the consolidation of the provincial republics' power to a small number of "situations in which they may legitimately take place…for example the moment when, on whatever pretext and short of outright war, foreign troops set foot in the state", indicates that he perceives the inherent danger, however.

In short, in order to remain virtuous and free in the classical sense of the terms, Poland cannot become a modern nation-state. Indeed, the chapter Rousseau entitles "The Radical Vice", is a discussion about the size of states; what is, of course, the most obvious empirical difference between the smaller polities of antiquity and gigantic modern states. The philosopher is unusually emphatic on the matter: "size of states! the first and principle source of all the miseries of humankind, and above all of the countless calamities that sap and destroy politically organized peoples" (CGP: 5.1). Indeed, all the reforms proposed in the philosopher's *Considerations* presume the advantages of a small republic insofar as "the strongest, the most powerful, and even infallibly successful" (and probably, the *only*) method of realizing his project is "that all Citizens constantly feel under the public's eyes... that everyone, from the least nobleman, even the least peasant

up to the King, if possible, be so dependant on public esteem that no one can do anything, acquire anything, achieve anything without it" (CGP: 12.12). Whereas large polities allow for general anonymity, simple polities "of a size limited by the extent of human faculties" are the necessary requisite of "the possibility of being well-governed" where the virtues of antiquity remain the standard (SD: ded. δ2).

Nonetheless, in the very first line of the chapter in which the size of modern states (and their impact on Poland) is Rousseau's principal subject, he cautions, "let us avoid, if possible, rushing from the very outset into chimerical projects." In the end, however, the reader must conclude that "giving to the constitution of a large kingdom the solidity and vigor of that of a small Republic" *is* a chimerical project (CGP: 5.1). His *Considerations*, if carefully considered in light of the *Social Contract* and *First Discourse* reveal why this is inevitably the case.

To begin with, the author of the *Social Contract* knows that his thirty-three Republics of human-scale will have different interests insofar as their particular situations give rise to unique political and social arrangements. Whereas some, preferably most, will rely on agriculture, others, perhaps limited by "soil unprofitable and barren", or finding themselves in a "country too small for its habitants" will be forced, as Rousseau suggests, to "turn to industry and the arts, the products of which you can trade for the food [they] lack" (SC: 2.11.4).

One of Rousseau's (seemingly) most uncharacteristic suggestions, that entire cities "where commerce, industry and the arts [are] most flourishing" be ennobled, can only be understood in the context of political necessity. Geographical circumstance will require that some republics rely on commerce for supplying life's necessities through trade. More importantly, perhaps, historical circumstance—namely the advancement of science and the technological revolution in warfare it made possible—will require that the Poles develop a weapons industry of their own, or, more recklessly, that they trade for guns and ammunition when they perceive the need for them, in order to defend their vast territory from the "even larger States, which, because of their despotism and military despotism, possess great offensive force" (CGP: 3.1). No matter what, industrial development on a significant scale seems unavoidable—either to produce weaponry, or to

produce commodities to trade for it—and the maintenance of small and independent republics is incompatible with this modern requirement.

As we have seen, the explosion of science and art, industry and commerce (developments which are central to the age of modern nation-states) have many, many debilitating consequences. Rousseau's *First Discourse* demonstrates very clearly that Rousseau appreciated the scope of this problem. What Rousseau said of his time is equally true of ours: "Ancient politicians incessantly talked about morals and virtue, those of our time talk only of business and money" (FD: δ42). What Rousseau's *Considerations* helps the thoughtful reader to understand is why it could not have been otherwise; his discussion of Poland's exceptional situation is carefully crafted to demonstrate why modern politicians simply *cannot* talk only of morals and virtue as ancient statesmen did.

In the final analysis, Rousseau appreciated that he lived in a thoroughly modern age, an age of business and money. What had been done would not be undone. Riches permitted more and more human artfulness, technological development permitted increased business, increased business multiplied riches, multiplied riches incited further technological development, and technology can (and will) be used to generate ever more wealth. The development of new nautical technologies, the increased charting of land and sea, and other technical advancements made the benefits of commerce irresistible to self-interested men and growing states. More than two centuries ago, Rousseau noted, "[t]oday where commerce, voyages, and conquests unite various peoples more, and their ways of life are constantly brought closer together by frequent communication, it is perceived that certain national differences have diminished" (SD: note *j*). National individualities, under ideal conditions, play an important role in the establishment of healthy polities. But inevitable developments connected to the progress of the sciences and the arts—"the crusades, commerce, the discovery of the Indies, navigation, far-flung expeditions", and many others—have not only incited the active consideration of radical alternatives suddenly brought to light in an increasingly interconnected world, but as Rousseau puts it, "everything that facilitates communication between nations transmits not their virtues, but the crimes of each of the others, and adulterates the morals appropriate to the climate of each and to the constitution of its government" (PN: δ15*n*).

With respect to the Polish federation, due to the nature of industry and commerce, a few of the small republics will undoubtedly grow rich while others will languish; some will grow powerful while others become vulnerable and conquerable. As had occurred in Europe, a polity's power (and thus, its prosperity, even its survival) will come to depend more on its economic prowess insofar as the economy (not patriotism, not courage, not martial training) comes to determine a state's military prowess. In the modern world, the soldier's arms—their quantity to be sure, but more importantly, their quality—matter more, much more than martial valor does. Rousseau can remove the "if" that prefaces what might as well be an emphatic statement: "cultivating the sciences *is* harmful to warlike qualities"! (My Emphasis; FD: δ51). Scientific research and development, and the institution of a curriculum appropriate to encouraging it, replaces a gymnastic education because the realities of international relations, transformed by what human artfulness can achieve in a stable and prosperous (Hobbesian) state, dictate that what is most useful to the state and its survival must be pursued. Sadly, but necessarily, it does so at the expense of the excellences nature prescribes for men.

The leaders of thirty-three small republics will, at best, be torn between what realpolitik prudence demands, and what citizenry and civic virtue (on the classical model) require—now radically irreconcilable. Thus, *mores* and public spiritedness will slacken here if they are not enervated there, and different republics' levels of commitment to the Confederation will vary insofar as their particular interests will not always coincide (and certainly will not equally coincide) with the interests of the larger association. In the long run, the confederation will benefit some states more than others, the states contributing the most will perceive the asymmetry, and eventually one of the more opulent republics will recognize that if it cannot (reliably) count on the willing and resolute participation of its neighbors in times of crisis, it must become powerful enough to defend itself on its own. Just as Rome did during the Second Punic War, the strong will turn to coercion where they cannot count on cooperation; after all, they have the most to lose (and as they are so often apt to see things, the most to gain).

Just as the Peloponnesian League failed, so will the Confederation, and an Athens will eventually pursue empire for the sake of its own security if not for the sake of material gain. Its neighbors will be assimilated—perhaps willingly, perhaps not—and

whether the imperial polity begins as an Athens or a Rome, sooner or later it will become what both of those republics eventually became—corrupted beyond repair by the wealth and luxury empire makes possible. Indeed, when Rousseau declares that "the rise of the Medicis and the revival of letters brought about anew, *and perhaps for always*, the fall of that warlike reputation which Italy seemed to have recovered a few centuries ago", he did not except Poland, or any other polity for that matter (My Emphasis; FD: 55). That Rousseau's (half sardonic) advice to peoples outside of Europe is so different than his advice to the European polities he addresses throughout his career is yet another indication that Europe's situation is a special (read: especially depraved) case. If Rousseau were the leader of "one of the peoples of Niger", for instance, he would "have a gallows erected at the country's border where [he] would cause to be hanged without appeal the first European who dared enter it, and the first citizen who ventured to leave it" (LR: δ60). It was already too late for this solution in Poland, Geneva, Corsica, and everywhere else in Europe. Nation-states had already become too interconnected; the sciences, the arts, commerce, industry, and their militaries had already progressed too far; all in all, it was much too late for the sort of prevention in Europe that he advocates for Africa. A disease which makes men "scheming, intense, greedy, servile and knavish" had already become a European pandemic, and Poland *could not* be insulated from similar illnesses for much longer. Where the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts has begun, the barbarians within will come to pose a graver threat to the body politic than the barbarians without, decadence will reign, and eventually the polity will lose the fortitude to oppose its enemies.

What Rousseau says regarding the state of nature in *The State of War* may be equally applicable to relations between modern nation-states. Where one entertains expansionist ambitions, where one's neighbors are large and powerful, "one must either imitate [them] or let oneself be swallowed by [them]".

The second alternative—that Poland continues to be conquered and subjugated, ("swallowed whole", as the philosopher puts it)—was far more likely, however. Consequently, it is possible that Rousseau's military reforms really have little to do with fortifying Poland ("you will never succeed in making it difficult for your neighbors to enter your territory"; "in adopting the plan I propose, one has to give up all hope of

conquest"; CGP: 13.11; 15.3). Of the two options above, then, Rousseau is resigned to, and may actually prefer that Poland continue to be conquered. After all, turbulence and anarchy had preserved Poland's *mores* while European's degenerated, and the philosopher is always wary of changing a good thing. Perhaps being "swallowed whole" again and again is precisely the fate Poland's Lawgiver hopes and expects for his people; perhaps his reforms are aimed primarily at inculcating a public spirit, at making Poles Poles, at rendering the polity "indigestible" since it can never be made impregnable; perhaps his project aims merely at "see[ing] to it that a Pole can never become a Russian", no matter how often Poland is conquered and subjugated (CGP: 3.1).

Two problems linger, however. The revolution in warfare Rousseau glosses over may well change the nature of conquest inasmuch as a modern army can annihilate an ancient one with relative ease, however spirited its resistance. And if the spirited class is dead, is seems unlikely the social spirit will persist. What is more, prolonged and bloody (to say nothing of perpetually unsuccessful) war may have inevitably detrimental effects on a polity. In spite of their success, it had some such effect on both Sparta and Rome; they became harder, crueler, and thereby more amenable to pursuing empire forcibly. A historical induction more germane to Rousseau's Polish experiment can be drawn from a post-Alexander Spartan example. In 228 and in the face of Macedonian hegemony, Cleomenes III attempted to reinstitute Sparta's martial *mores*, but failed miserably. Alexander had changed the nature of the international system, and the remnants of his powerful army slaughtered the emerging Spartan threat in its infancy. If it has been established that Rousseau's revolution will take more than twenty years, and if it has been established that the emergence of expansionist nation-states will be buttressed as never before by a technological revolution in warfare, then Russia and others will have ample opportunity to (easily) accomplish the same.

Thus, Rousseau has quietly demonstrated his awareness that a critical and seemingly unavoidable historical development has yielded a modern world altogether different from the one he so often eulogizes. It might be said that just as Roman ways, though perfect for the government of a small republic in the Old World, were not suited to the well-governing of the known world, so does Rousseau acknowledge that ancient ways and manners, though perhaps best for men and their *mores*, are not suited to the

successful governing of a state in a world thoroughly modernized by the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts.

Not to worry, Rousseau seems to argue. Such reforms remain possible because Russia will permit Poland to "organize itself undisturbed", for "they will believe that it is bent on weakening itself" (CGP: 15.3). Not so if they read this book, of course, and Rousseau knew well his books were widely disseminated, especially thanks to the printing press, some implications of which Rousseau discusses in the *First Discourse*. (What is more, it is not as if the Russians did not read French—in fact, quite the opposite was true: they wanted to be French!) But apart from announcing a plan to the world that could only succeed given an extraordinary level of secrecy and isolation, Rousseau carefully demonstrates his acute awareness that his reforms would never be tenable for at least one other critical reason. It is important that it be considered carefully.

The Spread of Christianity, and then… Enlightenment

If a technological revolution in warfare, increased commerce, and the changing realities of relations between states—all of them dramatically affected by (if not directly caused by) the development of the sciences—were not sufficient to persuade Rousseau that the wholesale reform of his favorite enclaves according to the classical republican model was impossible in his day, something else surely was. In *Emile*, the philosopher makes a grave pronouncement. "Public instruction no longer exists and can no longer exist, because where there is no longer fatherland, there can no longer be citizens. These two words, *fatherland* and *citizen*, should be effaced from modern languages. I know well the reason this is so, but I do not want to tell it. It has nothing to do with my subject" (Emile: p.40). In a few words, then, Rousseau reveals he has given up all hope for the reestablishment of a martial regime devoted to cultivating citizens, and he does so in a work published a full decade before his *Considerations*. If *Emile*, which Rousseau considered his best work, is meant to provide the plan for a quiet, moral education for men post-enlightenment, then perhaps the reasons why that education is necessary (and the only practical option) are best left out of a work directed at the education of modern youth. If not in *Emile*, however, Rousseau does discuss the reasons why a *new* "most beautiful treatise" on education is required (for so he characterized its classical

predecessor, Plato's *Republic*) (Emile: p.40-41) "Fatherland" and "citizen", concepts so essential to the cultivation of virtue and freedom in ordinary men—or at least the ordinary men of antiquity Rousseau seems to favor—must be effaced from modern languages, because in modern times, the force most important to the cultivation of citizens out of self-interested men has been enervated irreparably, if not altogether annihilated.

One of the main reasons "Europe is one" as the philosopher writes, is that it shares one religion. But it is not—it cannot be—a civil religion of the sort about which he speaks so favorably in the *Social Contract*'s second to last chapter: a set of principles unique to a particular country, that gives it its gods, its rites, and teaches its citizens to regard "everything outside the single nation which adheres to it as infidel, alien, barbarous..." The national individuality Rousseau thought so important for any healthy populace is impossible where different peoples share a common religion, which is to say, one god, one set of dogmas, one set of opinions and beliefs regarding the meaning of life and what happens after death (cf. SD: note *j*). The invincible reason for the end of the possibility of new citizens in Europe—and with it, everything that citizenship makes possible—is the end of civil religions in Europe, what constituted the single, most important and absolutely indispensable support for the public-spiritedness of ancient polities.

For as Rousseau wrote, a third, "more bizarre" sort of religion reigned in Europe. And while the philosopher dismisses this category as "so manifestly bad that it is a waste of time amusing oneself demonstrating that it is", he goes on to discuss it nonetheless, demonstrating precisely why Roman Catholic Christianity belongs to this final category (SC: 4.8.1). When one considers what Rousseau says, but especially, what the philosopher means, one has no trouble understanding why his books were burned, and why the French government ordered Rousseau arrested.

According to Rousseau, philosopher and friend of humanity, good civil religions engender almost unqualified devotion to one's fatherland and fellows; Christianity, in contrast, gives men two fatherlands. Uncharacteristically, Rousseau praises his great opponent's insights into this matter. "Of all Christian Authors the philosopher Hobbes is the only one who clearly saw the evil and the remedy." He realized that "the two heads

of the eagle"—secular and religious authority—must be united for any state to be well constituted. What is more, Rousseau is certain that Hobbes also recognized "that the domineering spirit of Christianity" is inconsistent with good government insofar as "the interest of the Priest would always be stronger than that of the State" (SC: 4.8.13). This is no great surprise, of course. The religious order believes in a power higher than the head of state, and so it teaches unqualified obedience to a God in heaven (who, in turn, teaches only qualifies obedience to 'Caesar'). As a result, self-interested men are not taught to subordinate their own good to the polity's, but that the "things of heaven" are, by far, most important. Since the kingdom of heaven promises rewards no earthly kingdom could ever match, nor even pretend to, the loyalties of any good Christian are forever and irreparably divided between the State and the Priest, and almost never evenly divided. A civil religion's god or gods must buttress the state by endorsing its this-worldly civil practices and civic demands, but Christianity abysmally fails on this count.

Rousseau denies that Christians can be good soldiers, and connected to this, he denies they can be republicans or patriots. Rousseau calls the Christian heaven—that "supposedly other-worldly kingdom"—the "most violent despotism in this world" (SC: 4.8.9). Rousseau may well be right that fathers of nations must "resort to the intervention of heaven" in order that naturally self-interested men "freely obey the yoke of public felicity" (SC: 2.7.10). But where men are taught that God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent—whether a man spends eternity in Heaven or in Hell, in eternal pleasure or pain—it is no surprise men come to respect His will (or what the religious order teaches regarding his will) and that they obey it absolutely, no matter what the temporal authority demands of them. When the state prospers, no *true* Christian dare enjoy the public felicity, nor does he permit himself to be proud of his country and countrymen; he thanks God instead, and at the expense of fatherland and of patriotism. When the State declines, "he blesses the hand of God that weighs down on his people", often interpreting this-worldly misfortune as a sign his community is not devout enough (SC: 4.8.25-26). After all, what do virtue and freedom in the classical sense of the words matter where "the essential thing is to get to paradise"? 'This worldly resignation' is but another means to that end. Indeed, to a good Christian, "[w]hat does it matter... whether one is free or a serf" on earth? (SC: 4.8.26).

Incredibly for the time and place in which he lived, Rousseau goes still further: "True Christians are made to be slaves; they know it and are hardly moved by it; this brief life has too little value in their eyes" (SC: 4.8.28). To a true Christian, therefore, "it does not much matter… whether all goes well or ill down here on earth"; since a good Christian lives only to die, good Christians make bad citizens (SC: 4.8.25). As for Christian soldiers, in the end, the faithful "know better how to die than to win." The result: earthly matters, including important affairs of state—war, peace, the polity's prosperity, even its very survival—are of little significance in comparison to a man's (irreconcilable) heavenly duty. It is not hard to see why Christianity is not an appropriate cornerstone for a martial polity; such a polity could never make the world tremble. In fact, exactly the opposite is true: the attitude toward life and death that Christianity inculcates is inimical to the state and to citizenship in virtually every way. As Rousseau notes, even driving out a usurper would trouble the good Christian's neighborly conscience. If they are ever forced to confront Sparta or Rome in war, "the pious Christians will be beaten, crushed, destroyed before they have time to realize what is happening to them" (SC: 4.8.27, 4.8.23). Bearing in mind the important political purpose Rousseau ascribes to religion, it is not hard to see why contemporary Christianity finds itself relegated to Rousseau's third, 'ridiculous religion' category, one quickly dismissed by the philosopher: "Everything which destroys social unity is worthless: All institutions which put man in contradiction with himself are worthless" (SC: 4.8.17).

But even as Rousseau concedes Christianity's soul and polity-withering effect, he laments that its ascendance may well have been inevitable. According to the philosopher, "[t]he Romans were [conquerors] by necessity and… in spite of themselves"; eventually

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[23] Rousseau certainly realizes that a polity underpinned by a tolerant civil religion will be forever vulnerable to those regimes whose civil religious convictions render them "bloodthirsty and intolerant"… the sort that breaths "only murder and massacre, and believes it performs a holy deed in killing whoever does not accept its Gods" (SC: 4.8.19). Rousseau knows a Christian army will never face a Spartan or Roman army, but he does realize the whole world is not Christian and that not every faith advances the tolerance the Christian West does. In *Of Civil Religion*, Rousseau, very quietly, announces a problem Montesquieu foresaw. In the latter's chapter on the weakness of the Eastern (Roman) Empire, the philosopher had made a declaration that should resonate (but tends not to resonate) with Westerners in modern times; "among a thousand examples, I need only mention that of Philippicus, Maurice's general, who, on the point of giving battle, began to cry at the thought of the great number of men who were going to be

they conquered all the known world. This led to increased decadence and opulence to be sure, but at the same time, with the projection of the Empire and its army came the inevitable projection of its *mores*, its opinions, and its gods. Its ways and manners, suitable for governing a small community of farmers and warriors, were simply not sustainable when it came to governing the world. Rousseau echoes Montesquieu,

> In the end the Romans having extended their cult and their Gods along with their empire, and often having themselves adopted those of the vanquished by granting them as well as their Gods freedom of the city, the peoples of this vast empire insensibly found they had multitudes of Gods and cults, more or less the same everywhere; and this is how paganism eventually became but one and the same religion throughout the known world. It was in these circumstances that Jesus came to establish a Spiritual Kingdom on earth; which, by separating the theological from the political system, led to the State's ceasing to be one, and caused the intestine divisions which have never ceased to convulse Christian peoples (SC: 4.8.7-8).

The "perpetual conflict of jurisdiction" may well have been inevitable, then, and it finally made "any good polity impossible in a Christian state". One might say that the end of citizenship, its freedom, and its virtue, can be traced to the eve of the day that civil religions disappeared forever. And one might add that the very possibility of a civil religion was threatened from the moment men and women turned their attention to practicing arts beyond the capacity of a single individual, at least if one believes that the eventual development of the massive, and expansionist, nation-states of modernity was inevitable sooner or later. Men acquired knowledge that would be passed down for generations, but it was knowledge that, once accumulated, permitted their sons to enjoy luxuries and accomplish marvels their fathers could not have imagined. What was learned could not be unlearned (especially with the invention of the printing press), and it was more often put to bad use than good. The malady eternal in man—his *amour de soi* and his *amour propre*—was not something new, but once men's loves were presented with new and artificial objects, their longings intensified thanks to their imagination, and this instigated an inevitable degeneration of their natural powers and aspirations.

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killed. The tears certain Arabs shed in grief, when their generals made a truce which prevented them from spilling the blood of Christians, were another thing entirely" (CRGD: ch.22).

On the possibility of the establishment of a new civil religion, perhaps one capable of subduing man's passions and, once again, transforming him into a citizen, Rousseau is categorically pessimistic; "several peoples, even in Europe or near it, have tried to preserve or to restore the ancient system, but without success; the spirit of Christianity has come to pervade everything. Holy Worship has always remained or reverted to being independent of the sovereign, and without necessary tie to the body of the state" (SC: 4.8.11). He echoes what he had argued in *Emile*; insofar as a concept like "fatherland", and a principle like absolute devotion to it, are artifacts of an earlier time, no Christian commonwealth—not Poland, not Corsica, not Geneva—can be insulated from the rise of Europe's bourgeoisie and the end of "citizen[ship]".

It is worth repeating that reform according to the Spartan model is impossible where polities cannot establish (and become devoted to) *their own* civil religions, their own customs, their own traditions, and their own opinions. In his *Considerations*, Rousseau explains explicitly why Poland must have dogmas that establish its national individuality—a "national philosophy", as it were. And at the same time, Rousseau quietly indicates the impossibility of his project by supplying the careful reader with the model his Poles would have to follow in order to maintain successfully their "patriotic zeal", such "that a Pole can never become a Russian", never be "digested" by their oppressors, even as Poland is "swallowed whole" again and again.

Consider in this light Rousseau's praise of Moses, a "Lawgiver", near the beginning of the very work that promises a plan for Poland's reformation. He is considered alongside Lycurgas and Numa, founders of Rousseau's two favorite republics and his most important examples of patriotism and martial virtue. The philosopher argues that "the same spirit guided all ancient Lawgivers"; Moses, too, sought to bind citizens and fatherland together with "religious ceremonies which by their very nature were always exclusive and national"(CGP: 2.7).[24] The importance of religious "reform" in Poland is highlighted by reflecting on the fact that the Jews have faced (and have

[24] At this point, Rousseau brackets the comment "see the end of the Social Contract". Most likely, this refers not to the section on the Lawgiver (which is closer to the beginning of the work), but on the section discussed here, the one which establishes why "exclusive and national" religious customs are no longer possible, hence why the spirit which guided *"all ancient Lawgivers"* simply cannot successfully guide modern ones.

persisted despite) many of the same impediments Rousseau predicts the Poles will continue to face. Jewish success, however, is attributed to what Rousseau never discusses with regard to the Poles—their religious founding and, consequently, their civil religion.

> [A]ll the bonds of fraternity [Moses] introduced among the members of his republic were as many barriers which kept it separated from its neighbors and prevented it from mingling with them. That is how this singular nation, *so often subjugated, so often scattered and apparently destroyed*, yet ever idolizing its rule, has nevertheless maintained itself down to our days, *scattered among the other nations without ever merging with them*, and how its morals, its laws, its rites subsist and will endure as long as the world itself does (My Emphasis; CGP: 2.4).

Perhaps Rousseau neglects to discuss the Poles' religion because they are already Christians, and as Rousseau wrote, they too were suffering "the intestine divisions which have never ceased to convulse Christian peoples".

The *Social Contract* offers some confirmation of this interpretation. In discussing the "long degradation of sentiments and ideas [required] before one can bring oneself to accept a being like oneself as master", Rousseau refers to a time when men had "no other kings than the Gods" (true of the Jews until "all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him… 'Give us a king to govern us'"), at which point he goes on to make reference to the Emperor Caligula, who had attempted to make himself the Jews' god and king (SC: 4.8.1; 1 Sam. 8: 1-6). This amounts to an implicit endorsement of Judaism precisely because Judaism managed to inculcate a genuine social spirit in its adherents. Rousseau must have Tacitus and Josephus in mind here. Both recount the occasion on which tens of thousands of Jews (including women and children) refused to submit to a foreign authority; they refused to worship the Roman Emperor as both their king and their god at a time when he erected statues to himself in front of the temple at Jerusalem. The Jews proved themselves indigestible, and have for millennia since. On this occasion, thanks mainly to the support of their civil religion, tens of thousands had the fortitude to refuse the rule of an outside power, and instead offered Caligula's soldiers their throats (Josephus: 18.8.1-5; Tacitus: 12.54).

Insofar as Rousseau's Poles will no doubt be required to respond to their many conquerors and subjugators in much the same way if they are to remain Poles at heart, even though they are ruled by Russians or by Germans, Rousseau forces his reader to confront a difficult question: can the Poles (or the Genevans, or the Corsicans, for that matter) ever successfully reform their polities along the pattern provided by the classical polis without some sort of "religion of the citizen" proper to the people in question. Without Lycurgus, Sparta (as we know it) could not have been; neither could Rome, without Numa, have been reborn after the Gallic sack to become the most virtuous of history's peoples. And similarly, without Moses, Rousseau suggests the Jews could not have remained Jews in the face of prolonged oppression. Thus, the philosopher means for his careful readers to conclude the Poles cannot. Good Christians, after all, might well be obliged to thank God and their conquerors in the same breath, especially the ones fortunate enough to be dispatched to their "true" fatherland in heaven.

Does this mean Poland needs a new religion; a Moses of its own? The historical development of science and philosophy has made this impossible also. So impossible, in fact, that Rousseau has no choice but to insist that he does not propose major reforms. "[T]aking men as they are"—or taking them as they were *after* the influence of Christianity, and then the Enlightenment—*major* reforms were impossible. In the end, the Poles were only *semi*-barbaric. True, in many ways they remained a young people—their tastes, their opinions regarding what is honorable and just, have yet to be wholly corrupted by the luxury and decadence that have infiltrated most of Europe with the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts. This accounts for Poland's temporary exceptionalism. Still, history would suggest Rousseau is right that "once customs are established and prejudices rooted, it is a dangerous and futile undertaking to try and reform them" (SC: 2.8.3). And Poland, with the rest of Europe, had been exposed to, and had wholeheartedly adopted, the most powerful of prejudices, Christian prejudices. To repeat an important point, religious dogmas are the people's most important opinions, and due to their very nature, religious prejudices are especially resistant to reform; in fact, "the people cannot tolerate having their evils touched even if only to destroy them" (SC: 2.8.3).

Founding a new religion in Poland is impossible for two reasons, then. In the first place, the Poles were already Christians (whether Catholic or Protestant is irrelevant to the essential point), and where religious dogma already reigns, if it is not simply impossible to found a new religion, it is certainly impossible to found a new religion without severely diluting religion's power over men. For to propose a *new* religion, even if it were possible to *convince* a people to believe in it, is necessarily to admit the existence of radically incompatible accounts regarding the very working of the cosmos. Insofar as religious faith supposes steadfast subscription to received opinion—most successfully accomplished where there are no others—to publicly acknowledge other possibilities, or even to permit public awareness of alternative interpretations of heaven and God, is necessarily to erode the very foundation of religious authority. For *His* authority to be absolute, questioning God must be unthinkable! Though new dogmas, rites, and gods would have been necessary to bring about the Poland Rousseau imagines, a new religious founding is all but impossible where men and women have a memory of the old order, something that cannot be utterly annihilated without annihilating, say, everybody over the age of ten (cf. Rep: 540ea).

The second reason founding a new religion is impossible is popular enlightenment. The realities of International Relations, as we have seen, meant that sooner rather than later, Europe's modern ideas and bourgeois ways would have infected Poland, and their effect would be as debilitating for the religious faith of Poles as it had been for the rest of Europe. Post-enlightenment, it should go without saying that no Lawgiver could ever have convinced the Poles he was God's messenger, that his very existence ought be regarded as a miracle. But without a civil religion, citizenship, patriotism, and the virtue of a Spartan or a Roman are impossible. Thus, the problem Rousseau only alludes to in *Emile* is treated subtly, but comprehensively, in the *Social Contract*, a book published only seven days before.

The *Social Contract* identifies another danger with which Christianity threatens Europe, however. The spread of Christianity meant not only the end of "religion[s] of the citizen" and with it, civic virtue and civil freedom, it also threatened what Rousseau calls the "religion of man". Rousseau's reasons for discussing this in a chapter entitled *Of Civil Religion* are not readily apparent. For Rousseau's "religion of man" sounds very

much like philosophy; it is "without temples, without altars, without rites, limited to the purely internal cult of the supreme God and the eternal duties of morality, [it] is simple religion of the gospel, true theism, and what might be called divine natural right" (SC: 4.8.15). And this sort of religion, or philosophy, endangers the wholesome political life *civil* religions are supposed to encourage:

> since ['religion of man'] has no particular relation to the body politic, [it] leaves the laws with only the force they derive from themselves without adding any other force to them, and hence one of the great bonds of particular societies remains without effect. What is more; far from attaching the Citizens' hearts to the state it detaches them from it as from all earthly things. I know of nothing more contrary to the social spirit (SC: 4.8.21).

But if it is also true that wholesome political life on ancient standards was already impossible as the result of Christianity's spread and the end of "religion of the citizen", then perhaps salvaging the possibility of philosophy, or "religion of man", was the best that could be hoped for in modern and enlightened times.

Precisely because Christian dogma—inimical to civic virtue—also prevented the radical examination of alternatives that lies at the very root of true philosophy, it had to be undermined to salvage what was salvageable. Montesquieu's analysis of the problem is an accurate one: "in ordinary disputes each person knows he can be wrong and hence is not extremely opinionated or obstinate. But in our disputes over religion, by the nature of the thing, each person is sure his opinion is true, and we are indignant with those who obstinately insist on making us change instead of changing themselves" (CRGD: ch.22). In Rousseau words, all religion (in the ordinary sense of the word, but excluding his "religion of man" or philosophy), "is bad in that being founded on error and lies it deceives men, makes them credulous, superstitious, and drowns the true cult of the divinity in a vain ceremonial" (SC: 4.8.19). In short, dogmatic subscription to (sacred) opinions inhibits the genuine pursuit of truth. Pre-enlightenment, the religious order was the only outlet for the exercise of powerful intellects. Dogmatic interpretations of Aristotle and Plato, for instance—interpretations carefully crafted to support the reigning religious order—had the (intended) effect of stifling genuine (but dangerous) philosophic inquiry in those suited to undertake it. It is precisely because Christianity, that third

"most bizarre" sort of religion, prevented both citizenship (the civil religion), and philosophy (the religion of man), that Rousseau cannot endorse (or "justify") the absolute reign of Medieval Scholasticism during the middle ages (Obs: δ45). Europe's reigning religion was certainly strengthened when, "in about the tenth century, the torch of the sciences ceased to light the earth", but Christianity promoted neither good polities that elevated the multitude (like Sparta), nor did it permit the ascendance of the great men polities such as Athens made possible. Because Christianity threatens the emergence of both "great peoples" that Rousseau refers to at the end of the *First Discourse*—Athens and Sparta—one perceives why Rousseau's analysis of the religion that reigned in his time is so categorically scathing. Christianity may, indeed, be "so manifestly bad that it is a waste of time to amuse oneself demonstrating that it is" (SC: 4.817). The solution: "destroy" Christianity in the only way possible, by enervating religion's power *tout court* through undermining men's fear of invisible spirits.

PART THREE:

Rousseau's Apology for the Sciences and the Arts

Modern Threats to Philosophy

Rousseau's position seems to be that for most people, religious faith is indispensable to virtue, and that where science spreads, faith disappears. He is, nonetheless, aware that not all religions inspire virtue and patriotism. Therein lies the crux of the modern dilemma. It is precisely because Christianity (both in its authentic form, and what it had become by the time Rousseau was writing) was anything but a civil religion that the philosopher does not defend Europe's reigning dogma. Indeed, the ascendance of Christianity is inimical to the very possibility of civil religion in Europe, and therefore, its spread actually served to vitiate the parochial patriotism and virtue of ordinary Europeans. This is the conclusion Rousseau subtly but convincing establishes in his *Considerations*. If Rousseau had, in the end, given up hope for a successful reestablishment of the wholesome ways and manners of antiquity, if he had given up on a return to martial virtue and the civil freedom of the citizen, a question essential to an adequate understand of Rousseau's political philosophy inevitably emerges; what is Rousseau's political intention? Alternately stated, what did the philosopher intend to accomplish by way of a critique of modernity leveled in the name of a way of life seemingly lost for all time?

Ironically, the answer to this question has much to do with the spread of the very religion responsible for homogenizing Europe's gods and its religious rites. Only after having come to terms with Rousseau's third, "most bizarre", type of religion—contemporary Christianity, especially in its Roman Catholic form—and its deleterious effect on the possibility of the reestablishment of wholesome (military) *mores* anywhere in Europe, can one turn back to Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, prepared to discern its deeper teaching. In the end, his polemic against the sciences and the arts conceals a subtle defense of what Rousseau refers to as the "religion of man" near the end of the *Social Contract*. It is an aspect of his teaching intended exclusively for philosophic and gentle men. For resolute as Rousseau's attack on the sciences and the

arts seems to be, it is anything but reckless. Concealed amidst his vehement (and genuine) insistence that ordinary men ought not engage in science and art (for the sake of their own good, even their own happiness), is a powerful apology for "true philosophy" and true art.

It might be argued that by the end of the discourse's *First Part*, Rousseau has already answered the Academy's question—or at least, his version of it: *Whether* or *If* [Si] the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts *has* contributed to purifying *or [instead] to corrupting* morals.[25] And his answer, based on the (recent) history of the species, is unqualified; human learning *has* corrupted *mores* everywhere knowledge has been pursued. But constant correlation does not prove a necessary and unavoidable connection. The last paragraph of *Part One* introduces *Part Two*. It ends with an exhortation: "let us no longer hesitate to agree on all points where our reasoning will be found to coincide with historical inductions" (FD: δ36). Having shown that these things "had always gone together" the reader is apt to assume Rousseau will proceed by attempting to establish "that one was indeed dependent on the other" in the second half (Grimm: δ14). Indeed, most of Rousseau's contemporaries did precisely this. It is a mistake that impedes any reader's gaining a satisfactory understanding of this work, however, and as such, it is a mistake that threatens to stand in the way of the successful comprehension and analysis of Rousseau's thought. The careful reader *must* read the discourse's *Second Part* with Rousseau's exhortation in mind; does the philosopher's reasoning *necessarily* "coincide[]" with the historical inductions he begins with? Does Rousseau actually establish a *necessary* connection between scientific development and the corruption of *mores*? Or, does his reasoning reveal that while the correlation he has established has been constant thus far, it does not have to be? Might he actually mean to establish that a third variable is actually responsible for the corrosive effect of learning on *mores* he has chronicled?

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[25] One of the discourse's more curious features is that Rousseau elucidates historical inductions in both parts of the work. Indeed, there are five in the section written explicitly to establish the correlation between the advancement of learning and the degeneration of *mores*, and seven in the section Rousseau supposedly composed to establish a "necessary connection" between cause and effect.

"Could knowledge and virtue be incompatible?" is the central of three questions that introduce the *Second Part* of the *First Discourse* (FD: δ36). That it remains framed as a question in spite of all the historical evidence Rousseau presents is surely significant. In the end, the answer turns out to be "no". For even though Rousseau goes on to maintain that he "endeavored to establish this necessary connection" in the *First Discourse*, what the careful reader discerns is that the necessary connection he does establish is essentially opposite to the superficial (and readily accessible) conclusion he cleverly "concocts" for common readers. As he puts it in his preface to *Narcissus*, "I showed that the source of our errors on this point is our mistaking our *vain* and *deceptive* knowledge for the sovereign intelligence that sees truth of all things at a glance" (My Emphasis; PN: δ19). Knowledge and virtue (rightly understood) *are* compatible, then. In fact, Rousseau's *First Discourse* subtly demonstrates why "science, taken abstractly, deserves all our admiration"; it is "[t]he foolish science of men" that deserves nothing but our "derision and contempt" (PN: δ18). Few readers have appreciated what Rousseau so impressively accomplishes in the *First Discourse*. It is "deceptive" knowledge and "vain" philosophy that are *necessarily* incompatible with virtue and wholesome *mores*. Hence, while defending the pursuit of knowledge before those naturally suited to pursue her admirably, he discourages its *vain* pursuit at the hands of those who are by nature destined to pursue her badly.

One of the keys to achieving an adequate understanding of Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* might well be the successful deciphering of what the philosopher means by "ignorance". It is largely as a result of the (intentional) ambiguities in Rousseau's use of the term that the discourse's pivotal eighth paragraph seems particularly resistant to an interpretation that conforms to either Rousseau's explicit indictment of learning, or even to the esoteric endorsement of learning (that slowly emerges as the discourse unfolds). Where Sparta's "happy ignorance" was a prerequisite for its unusual virtue and prosperity, here, seemingly uncharacteristically, Rousseau seems to endorse enlightenment, while apparently depreciating ignorance. He remarks that "the peoples of that part of the world [Europe] which is today so enlightened lived, a few centuries ago, in a condition worse than ignorance... a revolution was needed

to bring men back to common sense" (FD: δ8). Bringing men "back to common sense" is a good thing, it would seem, and enlightening them accomplished it.

To the extent Rousseau approves of enlightening men in order to bring them back to common sense, it is because their situation before enlightenment was "worse than ignorance". In his *Observations*, Rousseau implies that he had employed radically different senses of the term "ignorance": there is a "reasonable sort of ignorance, which consists in restricting one's curiosity to the scope of the faculties one has received; a modest ignorance, born of a lively love of virtue, and which inspires nothing but indifference toward all that is unworthy of occupying man's heart…" (Obs: δ58). This is the "happy ignorance" which permitted the Spartans to live their wholesome way of life quietly and contentedly. If Europe had "sunk back into the barbarism of the first ages", and if "a people can free itself as long as it is merely barbarous", the careful reader is perplexed: why does Rousseau endorse bringing such men to common sense by enlightening them here, at the expense of promoting Spartan-style ignorance? Answer: because something about their condition, although it was more or less barbaric, had developed enough that the Spartan's happy ignorance was not longer possible.

As it turns out, a sort of ignorance much worse than "happy ignorance" reigned in Europe "a few centuries" before Rousseau was writing; it was, as the philosopher would later put it, "a ferocious and brutal ignorance, born of a wicked heart and a deceitful mind". In fact, speaking directly of this difficult passage in a short response he wrote to a member of the academy who had denied Rousseau his vote, the philosopher explains that "[p]eoples had lost common sense not because they were ignorant, but because they were so foolish as to believe that with Aristotle's big words… they knew something…" (LNR: δ11). The multitude may well have been barbaric in that they had *forgotten* civilization, but they were not entirely barbaric. In his *Social Contract*, Rousseau implies that along with primitiveness or a lack of civilization, a (perhaps *the*) defining characteristic of a barbaric people from which a virtuous one can still emerge is that it has no memory of previous (and degenerate) ways and manners (and so they honor natural excellence for its usefulness; SC: 2.7.3). Happy ignorance was no longer an option in Europe because Christian dogma had not been forgotten with the sciences and the arts. This is why burning Europe's libraries and destroying its academies and universities would plunge

Europe back into barbarism yet "morals would gain nothing from it" (Obs: δ62). One would have had to burn the churches and destroy the influence biblical "truths" exerted. For medieval scholasticism ruled the hearts of the opinion leaders, and as such, Europe's condition was far worse than ignorance. What they thought they knew, and thus, what was taught from the pulpits, erected an impassable barrier to the wholesale, rebirth from the polity's ashes, revolution that would have been necessary to create communities like Sparta. At the same time, however, their dogmatic and narrow espousal of an adulterated interpretation of Aristotle threatened the very possibility of pursuing (and achieving) genuine knowledge: in Rousseau's words, « je ne sais quel jargon scientifique... avoit usurpé le nom du savoir, et opposait à son retour un obstacle presque invincible » ["I do not know what scientific jargon had usurped the name knowledge and opposed to its return an almost invincible obstacle"] (FD: δ8). The philosopher professes ignorance here, but he was already well aware (and his later experience with the church would serve to confirm) that false opinions contrived specifically to support bad religion were the almost invincible obstacle to both wholesome political life and political philosophy.

Had it been salutary opinion and a healthy civil religion that had "usurped the name knowledge," Rousseau's opinion of the reigning dogma and the desirability of a revolution to undermine it, *might* well have been very different. In fact, to be effective, salutary opinion must tend to suppress philosophy and its dangerous paradoxes. But Christianity was anything but salutary according to Rousseau. In a surprisingly bold letter to the Archbishop of Paris, Rousseau would remark, "I neither say nor think there is no good religion on earth. But I do say, and it is only too true, that there is none among those that are and have been dominant that has not cruelly wounded humanity... Is it a crime to want to eliminate them?" (LB: p.55). Rousseau was not the only philosopher to want to "eliminate them", and insofar as this paragraph veils a careful endorsement of Bacon's scientific project—what was ultimately responsible for destroying that "[pseudo-] scientific jargon"—it can be seen that from its very beginning, the *First Discourse* means to defend the possibility of philosophy, even as he appears to disparage the usefulness of pursuing of knowledge. Rousseau is well aware, of course, that the man he considers "the greatest, perhaps, of philosophers"—namely, he who was also "chancellor of England"—is very much responsible for vanquishing Christian extremism, which had

effectively threatened philosophy up until the Enlightenment in much the same way Medieval scholasticism had throughout the Middle Ages.[26]

Elsewhere, Rousseau's endorsement of Bacon's attempt to undermine religious extremism (which had intensified due to the division of Christianity into two sects, Catholics and Protestants), is slightly more accessible. If the end of the *Social Contract* can be interpreted as Rousseau's attempt to illuminate Christianity's detrimental effect on both political life and the possibility of philosophy, Rousseau can be understood as offering tacit support for the Baconian project and the advancement of learning even though he conspicuously omits all mention of modern science from that important work. Indeed, Rousseau's solution may not be possible without the successful realization of Bacon's project for the "relief of man's estate".

For Rousseau advocates absolute religious tolerance of belief, and a carefully qualified tolerance of public religious practice. Near the end of the *Social Contract*, the philosopher remarks, "Now that there no longer is and *no longer can be* an exclusively national religion, one must tolerate all those which tolerate the others insofar as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of the citizen" (My emphasis; SC: 4.8.35). The chapter's last sentence—"the reason for which Henry IV is said to have embraced the Roman Religion should make any honest man and especially any Prince capable of reasoning leave it"—applauds a practical attempt at the institution of such a policy. Henry IV became the legal heir to the French throne in 1584, but, being a practicing Protestant, he was forced to the south of France by the Catholic League which was supported by Spain and others at the time. He set about winning his kingdom militarily but was finally unable to take Paris. And so, famously declaring "Paris is worth a Mass", he renounced Protestantism and converted. While it is unlikely Rousseau agrees with King Henry regarding the value of his Paris, he no doubt has something of much greater consequence in mind as he applauds the king. Five years after Henry joined the Catholic Church, he declared the edict of Nantes, which, by officially tolerating Protestantism,

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[26] That he has Bacon in mind at this point may be confirmed by Rousseau's, "the art of writing was joined by the art of thinking", a statement reminiscent of Bacon's "writing [maketh] an exact man" (*Of Studies*). Incidentally, there are other indications that Rousseau has Bacon's *Of Studies* in mind when he wrote the *First Discourse,* including the comparison Rousseau refuses to draw

effectively ended the wars of religion that had divided France; essentially, it ended a series of bloody civil wars that had gone on for half a century. If the reason Henry embraced the Roman religion was to unify France and end religious fanaticism and civil war at home, Rousseau is arguing that an honest man or a good prince (in other circumstances, presumably) would be willing to leave the Roman religion for that same reason.

This echoes what Rousseau argues regarding tolerance in his *Letter to Voltaire*:

> there can exist religions that attack the foundations of society, and one has to begin by exterminating these religions in order to insure the peace of the state. Among these dogmas that ought to be proscribed, intolerance is easily the most odious... I would wish, then, that in every state there were a moral code, or a kind of *civil profession of faith*, containing positively, the social maxims everyone would be bound to acknowledge, and negatively, the fanatical maxims one would be bound to reject, not as impious but as seditious. Thus every religion that could conform to the code would be allowed; every religion that did not conform to it would be proscribed; and everyone would be free to have no other religion than the code itself (My Emphasis; LV: δ34-5).

All of this raises a number of difficult questions. In the first place, how can intolerant religious dogma be "exterminated" in light of the fact that religious conviction, by its very nature, is not uncommonly the most solid of men's convictions? Secondly, why is Rousseau, generally unqualified in his criticism of Hobbes' universal political science designed ostensibly to promote political stability, suddenly so concerned about "the peace of the state"? And finally, what can Rousseau possibly mean by "a civil profession of faith"?

The answer to the first question is the modern scientific project, a project that required popular support and widespread participation (which implies a degree of popular enlightenment), in order to succeed. Laurence Lampert argues that Francis Bacon had (very carefully) articulated the essential argument in *An Advertisement Touching a Holy War*. In his Interpretive Essay, Lampert argues that the short dialogue "seems to pit philosophy against religion with a view to bringing religion under philosophy's control"

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between agriculture and studies—one that the "greatest, perhaps, of philosophers" does draw in this same essay.

(Lampert: p.41-42). Bacon imagined a tamed Christianity—very much like ours today—one without the Catholic and Protestant extremes that had divided the countries of Europe, both internally and externally, for centuries. According to Lampert, "Bacon covertly justifies [this] monumental step, holy war or war on behalf of the propagation of faith, a faith to compete against Christianity and tame it, faith in science" (p.41-2).

While Rousseau's *Social Contract* reveals little in the way of Rousseau's familiarity with Baconian science and his project for the relief of man's estate, the *First Discourse* not only follows the scientific method (establishing a correlation between the development of science and the corruption of *mores* in the *First Part*, and endeavoring to prove a necessary connection in the *Second Part*), but in it, Rousseau expressly refers to Bacon as the "greatest, perhaps, of philosophers". Moreover, like Bacon, Newton and Descartes garner Rousseau's highest praise; they are "preceptors of the human race", men whom "nature destined to be her disciples"; they are among the few geniuses who might be "allowed to devote themselves to the study of the sciences" (FD: δ60). That Rousseau cites Newton in particular, whose physics became the model for subsequent attempts at general enlightenment, and that he cites Descartes, who with Bacon is regarded to be a founder of the modern scientific method, reveals that Rousseau does, in fact, support the reestablishment of the sciences. He encourages 'scientific' inquiry into man's nature—indeed, man "come[s] back to himself to... know his nature" through the studies of powerful intellects—this, however, at the expense of trusting blindly to religion's revealed accounts of man's nature. In fact, as Havens intimates, the discourse proper actually begins with a statement that explicitly denies the Biblical account of creation in favor of an entirely scientific explanation of man's origin and how he arrived *here*. Man did not emerge from the Garden of Eden, created by God in his own image, but "from obscurity somehow by his own efforts"; in fact, Rousseau asserts that he "dissipat[ed] by the light of his reason, the darkness in which nature had enveloped him" (FD: δ7; Havens: p.177). Thus, the discourse proper begins by endorsing science and philosophy at the expense of revealed religion.

While the specific characteristics of the tolerant civil religion the philosopher advocates remain somewhat vague in a world wherein "exclusive national religions" are practically impossible, what does seem certain is that science and philosophy, Rousseau's

"religion of man", would be permitted under certain circumstances, if not publicly tolerated.

In his *Letter to Beaumont*, Rousseau charges Christianity with having made reason "the greatest crime". Only because Europe's religion has cruelly wounded humanity by stifling its brightest lights (while providing no benefit whatsoever to ordinary men), can Rousseau justifiably endorse "eliminating" it. Christianity was suffocating to the best of men and life-denying to all men. Thus, the philosopher asserts that "a great good is accomplished for people in this delirium by teaching them to reason about Religion", which, in the final analysis, amounts to dissolving its authority. What is more, true philosophy is only possible where its practice is no longer subordinated to religious dogma. For genuine philosophy involves

> bringing [men] closer to the duties of man, removing the dagger of intolerance, giving back to humanity all of its rights. But it is necessary to go back to the principles that are general and common to all men. For if, by wanting to reason, you leave a foothold for the authority of Priests, you give fanaticism back its weapon, and you provide it with the means for greater cruelty (LB: p.55).

Before great thinkers can turn to interrogating "principles... common to all men" such that the few can learn for themselves and proceed to teach the many "the duties of man", yet another threat to philosophy must be overcome. For it must be recognized that while popular enlightenment may well have been required to vanquish what Rousseau considers to be a useless religion (along with its domineering dogmatism), it also led to the establishment of a new, perhaps even graver threat to philosophy. As Rousseau frequently notes, it is the many vain pseudo-philosophers who have sullied science and philosophy thereby rendering them dangerous to men's *mores*, something that was impossible before the recent popularization of learning. In essence, what saved philosophy from Christian extremism at the same time threatens it from a different direction—and this remains a most formidable problem today. In our modern age, everyone is permitted, even encouraged to "philosophize". The danger: "almost as soon as small minds have learned something, they believe they know everything" (Obs: δ23). True, popular enlightenment taught common men not to fear "invisible spirits", but it had the simultaneous effect of vulgarizing learning. The result: new ignorance mistaking

itself for wisdom, and quite as "ferocious and brutal" as Medieval Scholasticism had been. In fact, the philosopher goes so far as to call this vain dogmatic faith in enlightenment "criminal"; and sadly, many of Rousseau's contemporaries themselves provided "a most odious and faithful portrait" of it. For where true philosophers are, once again, "eager to recall to our hearts the laws of humanity and virtue", once the many are "enlightened", "enlightened" men make a game of obscuring and debasing men's duties and their virtues (Obs: δ58). All for the sake of personal fame and fortune, modern opinion leaders contribute to the multiplication of our vices whenever it contributes to the realization of their selfish ends.

Rousseau cites his own rather exceptional experience with philosophy as evidence of its near-universal proclivity to be practiced badly to the potential detriment of the political community. In his preface to *Narcissus*, Rousseau acknowledges that the pursuit of science can engender in man an "indifference to the rest of the universe... Family, fatherland, become for him words devoid of meaning: he is neither parent, nor citizen, nor man; he is a philosopher" (PN: δ25-26). The problem, as Rousseau sees things, is not *necessarily* that the philosopher loses interest in everything except communing with what actually *is*, and interrogating the good. A few may, but they hardly constitute the most serious political problem. Insofar as they drain the state's resources while contributing nothing of value to it, they are, admittedly, useless citizens. As long as they remain truly "idle", however, they are not actually "pernicious" and might even be tolerated in some regimes. They can inquire and interrogate to their hearts' content; they can even take up potentially polity-endangering inquiries regarding "the greatest good", "vice and virtue", and whatever else, so long as they do not seek the approbation of (or to influence) the many who might otherwise remain content to follow the polity's more-or-less salutary opinions on these important matters.

The problem, once again, is that malady eternal to the hearts of men. Even as "the pursuit of the sciences draws the philosopher's heart away from the crowd" in that his studies diminish his concern for often-pressing this-worldly political matters, "in another sense it draws in the heart of the man of letters... Anyone who cultivates the agreeable talents wants to please, to be admired..." (PN: δ26). Human vanity, then, is the real problem; most men are not content to remain idle and speculate at home alone, as it

were—they long for public acclaim. Though not necessarily out of vanity, even the best of philosophically-inclined men do not, in the end, remain idle solitaires either. For most, philosophy requires interaction with others—dialectical partners, as it were—and so students of philosophy, in addition to colleagues, take on students or write books, perhaps to inspire dialogue among their contemporaries on the matters most interesting to them, perhaps to rear philosophers of the future. If it does not affect all men, that all-too-human ardor to be admired influences the majority of them, and for these, students' and fellows' approbation and honor becomes their primary reward, and thus, the audience's pleasures and their preferences come to distort the philosophic and the literary activities of most. The majority of those who dabble in philosophy do so for the wrong reasons; they seek knowledge not for its own sake, not for its public utility, but rather for the status connected to pursuing letters in enlightened times; hence, what is pleasing to those they seek to impress comes to determine what is taught, how it is taught, and to whom it is taught.

For the best among philosophically-inclined men, the danger is augmented by their success. According to Rousseau, the "continued reflection on mankind, continued observation of men, teach the philosopher to judge them at their worth, and it is difficult to have much affection for what one holds in contempt" (PN: δ25). It is the recognition that they are on the better side of "a chasm of rank between man and man", as Nietzsche would later put it, that increases the pride in men of potential (BGE: aph. 257). For such men, driven as they are by their *amour propre*, heightened vanity threatens to sever them further from the rest of the universe and ordinary political concerns. Or at least, to the extent it does not, it is their concern for ordinary worldly honors that maintains their attachment to the multitude. What makes these potentially philosophic natures so dangerous, then, is that they care about the acclaim of the many, but they have no affection for them, hence no genuine concern for their welfare. As a result, they are willing to say and to do whatever will secure them this popular recognition, however damaging the effects.

Key to understanding Rousseau's defense of the sciences and the arts is his distinction between philosophy and "true philosophy", between philosopher and "true philosopher." As he notes in his preface to *Narcissus*, for all the dangerous teachings that

have resulted from "a taste for letters born of a craving for distinction"—and he counts Hobbes and "a thousand others" among these—he acknowledges that "we still have some true Philosophers". Rousseau's immediate qualification may amount to what he considers to be the essential characteristic of a true philosopher. "We still have some true Philosophers *eager to recall to our hearts the laws of humanity and virtue*" (My Emphasis; PN: δ20). That a true philosopher is not enslaved to a love of worldly honors, and thus, that he is not shackled to the acclaim of colleagues or of the multitude is no doubt *a* characteristic of the true philosopher. It is not, however, his *defining* characteristic. In the end, it makes his defining characteristic possible. Most importantly to Rousseau, the true philosopher pursues and defends the truth irrespective of public opinion, but then, the manner in which he philosophizes publicly is determined by public utility, by what benefits humanity.

Rousseau espoused this recognition early on: "when I took up my pen, I was not unaware of the fact that I could not at one and the same time court men, and honor the truth" (Grimm: δ28). From the *First Discourse* onward, Rousseau aims to uphold "the cause of truth", fully aware that those with the firmness of soul not to "yield to the spirit of his times" are apt to die in "poverty and oblivion" (FD: δ6, δ46). Indeed, he foresaw that he would "not easily be forgiven for the side [he had] dared to take", even that by "[r]unning contrary to everything that men admire[d] [in his day, he could] expect only universal blame" (FD: δ2). He was right about this, of course. This is why he expresses such surprise that his short work proved victorious; again, as Rousseau asserts, "I had tried to deserve [the prize], but had done nothing to obtain it." In the end, then, Rousseau must be counted not only among the "few geniuses", but among an even smaller number who came to prefer his own esteem to that of the public. Only in such men is it the case that Rousseau's third sort of ignorance, Socratic ignorance, makes its appearance. In these few, "insight into their own ignorance grow[s] as they learn, and they are the only ones for whom study may be good" (Obs: δ23). *Good* for their sake to be sure, but also beneficial to the polity. Rousseau ends the *First Discourse* by noting that "science", "working together" with "virtue" and "authority" can contribute to "the felicity of the human race" (FD: δ60).

Rousseau and "True Philosophy"

Rousseau's method of philosophizing and its consequent effects on men's *mores*, is so different from his contemporaries' efforts for at least two reasons. In the first place, while Rousseau's *amour propre* may well be what inspired his interest in philosophy and letters initially, there is no doubt but that it manifests itself more or less uniquely insofar as the object of his most powerful passion had somehow been transformed. It is not that public honor never moved Rousseau. Indeed, when Rousseau speaks of "the aberrations of foolish youth", inclinations toward vice even he could not always resist, the philosopher surely has his *less-than-philosophic* moments in mind (and perhaps also his having abandoned his five children to a foundling home). As he notes in his first born literary work, "the wise man does not chase after riches, but he is not insensitive to glory" (FD: δ55). Rousseau discusses, sometimes at length, his battle with that early sensitivity to men's acclaim. Speaking of his own early literary pursuits in his preface to *Narcissus*, he laments the "seductive charm" of letters and the sciences, referring back to his earlier admission that he was "long seduced by the prejudices of [his] century", prejudices which spawned the opinion that study was "the only occupation worthy of a wise man." Having "sensed their danger more than once", he admits that he once aspired to be a famed author, that the play this discussion prefaces was the product of that juvenile passion, even that it required long self-examination to determine whether he could count himself among "the few" whose "soul [could] bear the burden of literary pursuits". He begins his preface to *Narcissus* strangely, by insisting that this late addition to his early work has nothing to do with the play he appends it to: "what is a issue here is not my play, but myself" (PN: δ1). The preface explains why he, and presumably those few others suited to bear the burden of literary pursuits, are so exceptional. It is not that Rousseau has transcended his *amour propre*, it is that he has managed to refine it. As the philosopher puts it,

> ...in striving to deserve my own esteem, I have learned to do without the esteem of others, who after all, for the most part do without mine. But while it does not matter to me whether I am thought of well or ill, it does matter to me that no one have the right to think ill of me, and it matters to the truth I have upheld that its defender not be justly accused of having lent it his assistance on a mere whim or out of vanity, without loving it or knowing it (PN: δ2).

Thus, Rousseau reveals that an "ardor to be admired" still moves him; however, it is not other's admiration that he seeks, but his own. Since that esteem is contingent upon his pursuing and defending the truth—perhaps even as evaluated in comparison to previous (true) philosophers—his *amour propre* has actually been channeled such that it actually encourages genuine philosophy. Ultimately, it was only once the philosopher "[had] seen things from close up", that he learned to assess what generally passes for science and philosophy, "at [its] true worth". In a difficult and revealing note, Rousseau discusses his own transformation. He admits that he now laughs at his "former simplicity", namely, the naive belief that in everything he read, he saw "the author's soul and principles," that his century's famed writers were "modest, wise, virtuous, irreproachable men." The note ends: "Finally I saw them; this childish prejudice vanished, and it is the only error of which they have cured me" (PN: δ9*n*). But how did he finally detect their hypocrisy, their duplicity, in some cases even their utter viciousness; how did he finally come to *see things from close up*? It may be that Socrates' example—"this very exception that proves the rule"—finally exposed his century's sophists for what they really are. No longer did Rousseau compare himself to his contemporaries and seek their esteem and that of the many. Instead, Socrates' example provided a contrast to modern pseudo-philosophy so salient that Rousseau's *amour propre* was roused by comparisons to a most monumental figure—a true philosopher, such as for him existed only in books and beautified portraits. It is precisely because Socrates preferred his own condition to those of the polity's most esteemed men—all those with whom he would converse in the marketplace—that he had no reason to emulate them or attempt to impress them. Rousseau acknowledges that "if all men were Socrates, science would do [mankind] no harm", and Socrates is the model Rousseau adopts (PN: δ33; cf. LR: δ5).

Throughout the rejoinders inspired by "sophisticated" interpretations of his *First Discourse*, Rousseau makes it apparent that, like Socrates, he is tempted toward indignation not because his contemporaries have "made [him] out as ridiculous"—their invectives he can "quietly" bear without difficulty—but because they attempt to sully the truth and its honest pursuit. As Rousseau puts it, "I find it much more difficult to

maintain the same Equanimity toward those who leave my person out of account, and more or less adroitly attack the truths I have established" (PSLB: δ5-6). He likens his attackers to the many swaggerers—men "who forever boast[] of more than [they] can do, and who, after having stood up and insulted everybody, allow [themselves] to be defeated in the first encounter." Rousseau, on the contrary, is like "the wise man"; he "keeps all his courage in reserve for times of need, and never runs unnecessary risks." He resembles Socrates, and "a Philosopher at grips with his passions"—especially the passion for honor, for glory, even for eristic victory—passions that divert many men (including some of tremendous dialectical potential), from the honest pursuit of the truth (Obs: δ25).

Rousseau admits that his "veneration" for Socrates, a "true philosopher", "would greatly diminish if [Rousseau] believed that [Socrates] had the silly vanity of wishing to be the leader of a sect" (LR: δ69). Public honor and ridicule did not ("in the least") concern Socrates, nor does it effectively influence Rousseau post-discourse. This fact especially, that Socrates was not enslaved to silly vanities and others' esteem, may account for Rousseau's periodic likening of Cato, the veritable paragon of Republican virtue, "greatest of humans", and vocal critic of Socrates—to the Athenian founder of science, philosophy, and introducer of all the evils Cato lamented—including the eclipse of the possibility of Republican virtue (Ld'A: p.29). In fact, Rousseau asserts that Cato "continued in Rome" what Socrates had begun in Athens. "Socrates, learned and virtuous, did mankind honor; but the vices of vulgar men poison the most sublime knowledge and render it pernicious to the Nations"—this is the eternal problem with learning (LR: δ5). It is not science itself, then, but its misuse at the hands of ordinary men subject to ordinary passions, that makes it dangerous. Genuinely philosophic men like Socrates went to great lengths to mitigate the damage such abuses might cause the polity. Ironically, this includes the careful supervision, in some cases the censoring, of philosophic activity—for Rome, that of "cunning and subtle Greeks" especially, but in the days of the Republic, even the beautified accounts of Socrates and his "true philosophy" (FD: δ31). In Athens, Socrates attempted to save philosophy for the philosophic while at the same time protecting mankind from its abuses at the hands of the un-philosophic. Here, once again, our philosopher compares himself to the founder of

political philosophy: "It cost Socrates his life to have said exactly the same things I am saying..." (LR: δ5*n*; cf. Grimm δ19; LR: δ38, δ48, δ65; δPN: δ9, δ9*n*, δ33, δ38, δ39).

Not only does Rousseau devote an important section of the discourse to his third species of ignorance, Socratic ignorance and Socrates' "praise of ignorance", he goes so far as to liken himself to Socrates right from the opening paragraphs of his first important work. "Which side should I take in this question?" (one that concerns the happiness of mankind) he asks, "The one, gentlemen, that suits an honorable man who knows nothing and yet does not think any less of himself" (FD: δ4). These philosophers' shared recognition that they "know nothing" and their preference "to remain what [they are]" explains why neither became dogmatic, and at once, why neither is even tempted to succumb to the silly vanities and the pursuit of petty honors that motivates most of those with philosophic and literary ambitions (FD: δ28). Just as Plato's Socrates had asserted he knew only that he knew nothing at the end of his philosophic career, Rousseau begins his with virtually the same assertion.

As it turns out, from start to finish, the *First Discourse* offers a careful defense of the sciences and the arts it seems to attack so resolutely. The discourse proper, for instance, begins by echoing its preface. The question which prompted Rousseau to take up his pen is one of the "greatest" or "grandest" [grandes] and "noblest" or "most beautiful" [belles] (FD: δ1); similarly, watching man emerge from the obscurity and darkness of nature to "soar intellectually" and come back to the study of man, his nature, his duties, and his end, is a "great" or "grand" [grand] and "noble" or "beautiful" [beau] sight (FD: δ7).[27] Rousseau's conspicuous application of the same adjectives to describe both the gravity of a question that will lead him to indict man's pursuit of knowledge, and the glorious sight of man's proper and successful pursuit of knowledge is but one of several powerful esoteric indications that Rousseau's treatment is far more nuanced that it

[27] It should be noted, here, that the superlatives in the preface ("greatest" and "noblest") are only implied by the structure of the sentence; the language which Rousseau employs to begin both the preface and the *First Part* (« grand » or « grandes » and « belles » or « beau ») is unmistakably similar (except that "questions" [« questions »] requires plural adjectives in the feminine gender, while "sight" or "spectacle" [« spectacle »] requires singular and masculine adjectives. The preface's first sentence «Voici une des grandes et belles questions qui aient jamais été agitées» might, more literally, be rendered, "Here is one of the great [or grand] and beautiful questions ever to have been debated".

initially appears to be. Indeed, by the end of the *First Discourse*, Rousseau accomplishes what he sets out to so. He manages to "reconcile contempt for study with respect for the truly learned", and he dares "blame the sciences before one of Europe's most learned Societies" even as he "praises ignorance in a famous Academy" (FD: 5).

What must be seen in order to understand the discourse, is that the "truly learned" is a very small group indeed; the "ignorance" he praises in a famous academy (while he praises Spartan's "happy ignorance" to common men) is Socratic ignorance; and the point of his praise is that he means his own example to have an inspiring effect on the readers he cares about most, much as did Socrates' example have on him. In fact, Rousseau's primary concern in the *First Discourse*, and throughout his career, is the protection of philosophy, "true philosophy"—a distinction made more necessary than ever by the enlightenment's popularization of learning. True, he praises the revolution that "brought into Italy the debris of ancient Greece", a revolution that "enriched" France even though it revived the sciences and the arts for small minds as well as great ones. For the sake of philosophy, however, another revolution is now desperately needed. The Renaissance did end "a condition worse than ignorance" by popularizing learning in order to overcome of the dogmatism that threatened it. But it also promoted a new sort of unselfconscious ignorance, a new dogmatism, that in its turn threatens to extinguish the possibility of man's rising "above himself" to "soar intellectually into the celestial regions" and come back to "know his nature"—and all "by the light of his reason" (FD: δ7). Now that everyone believes that what they happen to think they know is the final truth of things, radical and comprehensive inquiry is stifled in favor of the enlightenment's easy egalitarian "truths". As the philosopher puts it, "it took a revolution to teach [medieval scholars] that they knew nothing, and another is badly needed to teach us the same truth" (LNR: δ11). It is a revolution that will might well begin with Rousseau's modern repetition of Socrates' praise of ignorance, for Socratic ignorance, the absence of dogma Rousseau's contemporaries could never have claimed, may well be the very prerequisite for the honest pursuit of truth, or "true philosophy".

Rousseau and Socrates are certainly among a small group of "true philosophers"; nonetheless, Rousseau implies that the battle not to court the public's favor, not to blush if the many do not enjoy his works, not to seek to "undermine his rival's fame"—in

essence, the battle not to succumb to those silly vanities—is an ongoing one; he may even mean for his own example to counsel "the few" with the stuff to become future philosophers. It was as clear to Rousseau as it was to Socrates that they did, in fact, know more than those reputed to be wise—his century's poets, its artists, its orators, and its sophists—if only by virtue of their not presuming to know more than they did. If philosophy is, in the end, a thumotic activity, (which is to say, driven by the spirited part of the soul), and if Rousseau is right that even the philosopher does not transcend his *amour propre* but must channel it, then the small number of "best of men" for whom Rousseau subtly reveals his true principles—"wise men" whom the philosopher repeatedly assures us are "not insensitive to glory"—have much to learn from history's true philosophers.

But the most spirited men are most sensitive to public ridicule and public dishonor. Thus, the most spirited men are also most likely to become corrupted by a regime that praises and blames all the wrong things. Socrates and Rousseau help to inspire indifference to the ignominy of the crowd by providing monumental examples for all time with whom philosophic natures can compare and identify themselves. At the beginning (at least), it is *amour propre*—manifest as self-esteem drawn from comparisons with past philosophers deserving of high esteem—that permits philosophically-inclined men to overcome both their fear of public ridicule and their lust for public honor. And as Rousseau reminds us more than once, indifference to public approval and disapproval is a definite requisite for the pursuit and defense of truth.

For this reason, Rousseau devotes the discourse's longest speech (and perhaps the most important part of the *First Discourse*) not to Cato, Fabricius, or any other exemplar of antiquity's patriotism, martial virtue, and civic freedom, but to a learned man and teacher of philosophy. For in an age where *fatherland* and *citizen* can no longer have any meaning, perhaps we moderns have much more to learn from Socrates' example than we *ever could* from a Cato. It seems that the attitude Socrates espouses at the very center of his speech establishes the model modern learned men *must* follow in order to make the most of their hour upon the stage. For philosophic virtue and the philosopher's self-sufficiency—what may well amount to civilized man's closest possible approximation to

the natural freedom of Rousseau's "solitary" natural man—may well be the highest models of excellence realizable in modern times.

It is true, not succumbing to the ignorance of modern dogmatism, (which, taken together with men's vanity, makes most modern men of letters vicious and criminal), is a task beyond the strength of most men. It always has been, and it always will be. More than anything else, this ineluctable intellectual inequality between men accounts for the distinction all true philosophers must make between "vulgar readers" and the readers Rousseau and those like him care most about. One of Rousseau's major reproaches against his century is that its "crowd of elementary authors" have made this critical distinction, (and with it, the question Socrates asked himself: "which [would I] rather be, what I am now or what they are") all but disappear. Philosophy has degenerated into something fashionable, something anyone can dabble in. A multitude of elementary authors accomplished this by "remove[ing] the difficulties that blocked access to the temple of the muses" such that all who are attracted to science and letters for its honor can participate in it regardless of their philosophic or literary capacity (FD: δ60). Where this Enlightenment ideal reigns, however, what most call "success", even in philosophy (as in the fine arts), is determined by public acclaim, not by true merit—and that standard is infinitely more achievable for mediocre talents. By removing the difficulties while at the same time lowering standards such that all can participate, the very obstacles "that nature put there as a test of strength for those who might be tempted to learn", are also eliminated (FD: δ60).

Thus, near the end of the discourse Rousseau reveals that one of his earlier suggestions implies something very different than a reader likely supposed at first reading. Rousseau had initially implied (near the end of the *First Part*), that nature, in her "eternal wisdom", had attempted to prevent man's pursuit of science altogether. What he actually says, however, is that nature had attempted to keep mankind "from being harmed by knowledge just as a mother wrests a dangerous weapon from her child's hands", that she had hidden her secrets from her children to protect us from their dangers, that had it not been for mankind's arrogant attempts to emerge from the "happy ignorance" nature prescribed, the sciences and the arts would never have developed, and the life of man would still be undivided and tranquil, peaceful, quiet, happy and free. All

of this is, however, amenable to a very different interpretation. Nature "did not destine us for *vain* studies" (My Emphasis; FD: δ35-36). It is not that she intended to shield all her children from science forever; it is that she attempted to deter those unsuited for its pursuit, those who would pursue it *vainly* and in whom learning *is* a dangerous weapon. In short, nature may well have intended to protect men from the sciences, the arts, and the damage they can cause, but she did not mean to prevent their pursuit altogether. In fact, by making men unequal, Rousseau suggests that nature *destined* men to pursue science, or at least, that natural inequalities are the catalyst for what Rousseau refers to as the genealogy of science and art. With a shrewd understanding of its normal rhetorical effect, Rousseau asks, "What brings about all these abuses if not the disastrous inequality introduced among men by the distinction of talents" (FD: δ54). But he also shows by his example (and by argument) how such inequalities, properly cultivated, can tend to the amelioration of individuals, and through them, the species. Men like Rousseau, it turns out, are the children into whose care any good mother entrusts herself and all her weapons. And they are children who use them to defend their mother, just as Rousseau defends nature and what she prescribes for men. Rousseau's task is so difficult because so many who are unsuited for philosophy have sullied her by employing science and its dangerous paradoxes as weapons to stifle nature's voice, which is to say, as weapons against man's excellences and his true happiness.

Some time before popular Enlightenment, Michel de Montaigne, a "philosopher" whom Rousseau acknowledges as his teacher, perceived this danger very clearly. Even though Montaigne's position turns out to be quite similar to Rousseau's guarded thesis, Rousseau makes no less than seven references to Montaigne, and they are generally designed to advance those aspects of the teaching intended for common men in the *First Discourse*.[28] According to Rousseau's Montaigne, immersion in letters and the eristic competition that usually results is "'... a very inappropriate occupation for an honorable man'" (FD: δ14*n*). The simple and savage nations Montaigne prefers to the Laws of Plato are perfectly governed and happy; they "do not even know by name the vices we

[28] My discussion of Rousseau's use of Montaigne draws extensively on Masters' and on Havens' notes. Where Rousseau does not attribute his references to Montaigne (and where he does), they have indicated the corresponding essays.

have so much trouble repressing" (FD: δ22*n*). Montaigne (and Seneca) are the "philosophers" whose authority Rousseau invokes to support his assertion that "good men" have disappeared since "learned men have begun to appear" (FD: δ31). Montaigne is "the sensible man" who relates the anecdotes which "teach us" that the "study of science is much more apt to soften and enervate courage than to strengthen and animate it" (FD: δ48). The "wise man" Rousseau quotes approvingly, who prefers that his pupil be strong to his being learned, is the same Montaigne; in fact, most of the discourse's longest note, that in praise of Lycurgus' "monstrously perfect" gymnastic education, is taken directly from Montaigne's *Of Pedantry*. Even the "glorious distinction" with which Rousseau ends the *First Discourse*—that between two peoples, "the one knew how to speak well, the other to act well"—is drawn from the closing paragraphs Montaigne's same essay (FD: δ62).

But just as Rousseau calls both peoples, the Athenians and the Spartans "great", so does Montaigne have a favorable impression of the sort of excellence Athens made possible before the city was destroyed by sophists and orators. Of all the instances in which Rousseau invokes Montaigne, the central reference may well be the most revealing of the philosophers' true thesis regarding the reestablishment of the sciences, and their attempt to protect future Athens from men who would ruin her by their vain pursuit of sciences and art. He compares the simple, rewarding life of a citizen and a patriot to the life of a man who devotes himself to "sterile speculations"; with Montaigne in mind, Rousseau asks, "Are we destined then to die fixed to the edge of the pit where the truth has hidden?" Rousseau implies that the question is rhetorical and thus, that the answer is obvious. But it *is* a question to which there are *two* possible responses. To common men, Rousseau declares, "this reflection alone should rebuff, from the outset, any man who would seek to educate himself by the study of philosophy" (FD: δ38). And he is right to imply the pursuit is hopeless; for most, at least, it can only deprive men of the pleasures he might otherwise be suited to enjoy even as it endangers the regime.

To potentially philosophic men, however, those undeterred by the philosopher's repeated warnings, Rousseau's genuine answer to this question may well be the one Montaigne provides. In his essay, *Of the Art of Discussion*, Montaigne's answer to this question is basically the opposite of Rousseau's teaching to common readers: "We are

born to quest after truth.... It is not, as Democritus said, hidden in the bottom of abysses, but rather elevated to an infinite height in the divine knowledge" (*Of Discussion*). The Spartans were a "great people"; they are an example of ordinary men made better because their laws and opinions rebuffed "from the outset" any man who would dabble in philosophy and literature (thereby preserving the polity's happy-ignorance); thus they became veritable demi-gods according to the philosopher. But naturally talented men can rise even higher; they "are born to seek the truth"—and thus, they can become philosophers. Athens, also a "great people", permitted this. But since very few have the potential to benefit from the life devoted to learning (though far too many have the vanity to believe they can where it is honored), Rousseau *must* carefully conceal this aspect of his thesis—for the benefit of cities which permit philosophy, for the benefit of mankind, and for the benefit of future philosophers. Once again, Rousseau was forced to conceal his genuine teaching due to the nature of man's vanity, and the nature of true philosophy. Nonetheless, careful examination of the discourse reveals that his first intention is to preserve the possibility of true philosophy for those few geniuses suited to the pursuit.

Montaigne had been more forthcoming when it came to this question. In fact, he openly acknowledged an important fact Rousseau could not make explicit, but which nevertheless determined how he wrote from the *First Discourse* onward—namely, with the interests of at least two very separate audiences in mind. The philosophers agree that due to permanent inequalities between men, the majority are simply unsuited for rigorous study; for in

> such people, whose souls are, both by nature and by domestic education and example, of the basest alloy [,] the fruits of knowledge are immaturely gathered and ill digested, and deliver[] to their recipients quite another thing... Knowledge is an excellent drug, but no drug has virtue enough to preserve itself from corruption and decay, if the vessel be tainted and impure wherein it is put to keep (*Of Pedantry*).

Commenting on "Plato's principal institution in his *Republic*" —that the polity's men (and women) are charged with tasks and employments "suitable to their nature"—Montaigne adds that "cripples are very unfit for exercises of the body, and lame souls for

exercises of the mind. Degenerate and vulgar souls are unworthy of philosophy" (*Of Pedantry*).

Rousseau wrote at a time in which "degenerate" and "vulgar" souls were dabbling in philosophy. As a result, he more so than Montaigne, might have been "apt to conclude" (categorically) that just

> as plants are suffocated and drowned with too much nourishment, and lamps with too much oil, so with too much study and matter is the active part of the understanding which, being embarrassed, and confounded with a great diversity of things, loses the force and power to disengage itself, and by the pressure of this weight, is bowed, subjected, and doubled up (*Of Pedantry*).

Both, however, realize that "it is quite otherwise". For on account of "the inequality that is between us"—and Montaigne maintains that the difference between man and man can be even greater than the difference between some men and beasts—by nature, a small minority of people have much loftier natures to begin with. For these few, the "soul stretches and dilates itself proportionately as it fills". That these few realize their potential is important not only to them, however, but to the political community as a whole, and to the multitude of un-philosophic men. For just as Socrates had argued that philosophy is the only way to that "last thing to be seen… the idea of the good… and that the man who is going to act prudently in private or in public must see it", so does Montaigne (and through him, Rousseau) perceive "in the examples from elder times... able men in the handling of public matters, great captains, and great counselors in affairs of state, have at the same time been very learned" (Rep: 517c; *Of Pedantry*). Most radically, Rousseau agrees with both Socrates and Montaigne: "unless… philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize… there is no rest from ills for the cities… nor I think for human kind" (Rep: 473de).

Recognizing that as long as political authority and wisdom are not united, Princes will act badly and their subjects will remain "vile, corrupt, and unhappy", Rousseau ends his short essay with a series of prayers. "[M]ay kings not disdain to allow into their councils the men most capable of advising them well... May learned men of the first rank find honorable asylum in their courts... May they obtain there the only recompense worthy of them: that of contributing by their influence to the happiness of the people to

whom they will have taught wisdom" (FD: δ60). These are prayers because in Rousseau's Europe, where all are permitted to dabble in philosophy, philosophy is, in effect, debased and dishonored—"spattered with mud", as it were, but in the guise of promoting it. Enlightenment erects a potentially insurmountable obstacle to philosophic kingship by transforming the philosopher's defining activity—the pursuit of truth—into little more than a fashionable prejudice. To support popular enlightenment is to erect a nearly invincible dogmatism in the place of what was once the honest endeavor to move beyond dogma and free oneself from the cave—if only eventually to rule it for the good of those confined by nature to living in the realm of opinion (cf. Rep: 520a). What is more, insofar as philosophers require dialectical partners insofar as "our mind is strengthened by communication with vigorous minds" Montaigne is right to note that the Enlightenment threatens to stifle philosophy by fraudulently "ennobling" lesser intellects. His attempt at politesse would probably not be appreciated by most who consider themselves philosophic today: "it is impossible to say how much [mind] loses and degenerates by our continual association and frequentation with sickly minds..." (*Of Discussion*).

As a consequence, just as strength of body (which must be exerted in order to be augmented) is instead sacrificed where gymnastic education is neglected, so too intellectual power and greatness—"great genius", in Rousseau's words—is sacrificed where the modern Enlightenment ideal succeeds in eliminating the very models and the difficult challenges that would serve to cultivate intellectual strength. Instead of highlighting, and with the proper rearing, widening the chasm between man and man, we moderns would annihilate it in the name of equality. What Rousseau says of the effects of the popularization of learning on military virtues—that "true courage" and "the vigor of the soul" are enervated—is equally true of the philosophic virtues. Without exercise, the powers and qualities that make a "true philosopher" cannot but atrophy due to neglect—that is, if they ever develop in the first place. As a result, potentially great men are diminished, not enhanced, by their cave; their historical circumstances, what the polity praises and blames, actually erects an almost impassable barrier to their realizing that potential. It is not that we moderns live in an age where there is a lack of tasks for great men—in fact, the very opposite is true. What constitutes a truly soul-withering

problem is that so many believe it impossible to rise any higher than what ordinarily passes for intellectual excellence in the cave. The lack of heroic examples which the best of individuals might emulate and evaluate themselves against is so a serious problem because the energy and imagination of these few is not stimulated to realize their full potential. Essentially defined by their restless *amour propre*, they are disposed to compare themselves perpetually, in great matters as in menial ones. "We owe what is best and worse among men, our virtues and our vices, our sciences and out errors, our conquerors and our philosophers" to this lust to compare. Hence the critical importance of the objects of men's comparisons (SD: 2.52).

What shall we think of that crowd of elementary authors who have "indiscreetly broken down the door of the sciences and let into their sanctuary a populace unworthy of approaching it", men who have effectively diminished if not dissolved the appeal of true philosophy by their comparatively miserable example? (FD: δ60). It would be preferable, Rousseau responds, that "all who could not go far in the learned profession... be rebuffed from the outset and directed into arts useful to society", leaving science and philosophy for the few naturally suited to undertake it (FD: δ60). Mediocre versifiers and geometricians might have made "great cloth maker[s]", Rousseau contends, and devoted to professions for which they have adequate talents, they might have lived much happier lives.[29] While it is now too late to "rebuff" common men, perhaps those unsuited for letters and philosophy can be expelled from the temple after the fact. Perhaps it can even be said that Rousseau's critique of modernity in the name of antiquity is importantly concerned with restoring the dignity of philosophy by providing a suitable example—his own strange, and fastidious example. Indeed, the philosopher may very well mean to help reestablish (even to enlarge) the great chasm or rank between man and man the Enlightenment had attempted to bridge, if not conceal by denial. Evidence of this can be

[29] Rousseau's example here, that of a cloth-maker, is a clever one in that it reminds us of an insoluble problem. In most climates, clothing is a necessity. Where clothing is made of cloth however, men disposed to compare everything in perpetuity will develop preferences and notions of beauty when it comes to their dress (or their women's dress). Thus, even in a polity where only necessary commodities are permitted, comparisons will be drawn (with regard to food and clothing especially), notions of rank will be established, and men will long for 'more of the best things'. Not surprisingly, this often leads to conflict since there is often a large demand for the best things, which by their very nature are usually in quite short supply.

found in the manner Rousseau begins his *Confessions*. Its opening statement—"I have begun on a work which is without precedent, whose accomplishment will have no imitator"—is a deliberately goading one. They are words carefully designed to rouse the *amour propre* and direct the "craving for distinction" than animates the "only readers [Rousseau] care[s] about" (CNFS: bk. 1, δ1). Rousseau has "studied mankind and know[s] [his] heart", which means, he knows what moves men of his potential.[30] Thus, to assert, "I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no on in existence" and to imply he is better for it, even that nature has destroyed the mold from which he was cast, is to move the pride of spirited men by challenging them to surpass his example (CNFS: bk1. δ2). In short, his rhetoric is designed to inspire future philosophy by cultivating promising men through their *amour propre*.

Rousseau asks, "What is philosophy?" in the *First Discourse*, only to imply the so-called philosophers' various teachings are but useless speculations, that "so many establishments created for the benefit of the learned are thereby all the more able to deceive concerning the objects of the sciences..." (FD: δ58). What is the proper object of the sciences, then? Rousseau refuses to venture the old comparison between agriculture and philosophy claiming "it would not be tolerated". This essentially amounts to yet another indictment of the enlightenment's intellectual climate (and that remains with us, post-enlightenment), making it difficult, even today, to venture such a comparison. To imply the true aim of such studies might be the *cultivation* of excellent individuals, or the cultivation and elevation of the entire species, is simply not permitted; our nearly invincible penchant for egalitarianism and distaste for any sort of elitism prevents it. In his essay *Of Studies*, "the greatest, perhaps, of philosophers," asserts what Rousseau may mean to imply here. Studies "perfect nature, and are perfected by experience; for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need proyning by study."

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[30] Regarding his understanding of men and their motivations (and how he developed it), Rousseau again likens himself to Socrates and distinguishes himself from his contemporaries. Speaking of M. Gautier in particular (one of the sophists who had attacked his discourse), the philosopher asserts, "he appears to have studied men the way the Peripatetics studied Physics, without leaving his closet. I, on the other hand, closed my Books, and after having listened to men talk, I watched them act. No wonder that, having followed such different methods, we agree so little in our conclusions" (Grimm: δ13).

As Leo Strauss cogently puts it, "[t]he pursuit of science... *requires* the cultivation of talents, that is, of natural inequality; its fostering of inequality is so characteristic of it that one is justified in saying that concern with superiority, or pride, is the root of science or philosophy" (My Emphasis; NRH: p.259). Rousseau worked to establish salutary new heroes and renew old ones, even as he exposed modernity's new villains. His own monumental example is intended to help channel the energy (especially of *amour propre*) in a naturally select few toward cultivating individual greatness, and through their leadership, goodness in the multitude. By drawing the comparison to men of the stature of Socrates and Rousseau in order to emphasize how utterly contemptible most modern "philosophers" actually are, and by exposing the pettiness and the vanity that moves most men of letters (which is to reveal that they are but paltry shadows of true philosophers), two things are accomplished. Even as those readers Rousseau cares about are thus drawn to philosophize according to the philosophers' examples, the many—men who are, by nature, too weak to overcome the obstacles nature erected in front of "the temple of the muses" as a test of strength—are discouraged from engaging in science and art because the models they might emulate with success are revealed to fall on the worse side of an unbridgeable chasm between ordinary men and great ones.

Thus, to help ordinary men live a happy and fulfilling existence, as a common man speaking to common men, Rousseau dismisses the sciences and the arts absolutely. The *function* of the *First Discourse*, according to Strauss, "is to warn away from science, not all men, but only the common men", men for whom the vain pursuit of knowledge not only harms society, but in whom philosophizing is personally damaging. (IR: p.260). For the many, even the awareness of the questions science immediately raises puts men and women in contradiction with themselves, which all but annihilates the possibility of achieving the psychic repose genuine felicity and true happiness may well require. Even the sweetest sentiments known to man, conjugal love and paternal love, are threatened where men and women are taught to ignore nature's voice in favor of the contrived behavior and overt deception fashionable modern dogmas perpetually demand of us. Sparta's salutary opinions improved ordinary men by making them into complete citizens. But dabbling with truths most will never come close to comprehending leaves modern man floating amongst incompatible inclinations: what he perceives to be his

duties, what his cave calls his role, what his cave honors as human excellence, and what awareness he possesses that previous caves have elevated incompatible excellences and honored very different attributes. These are contradictions most are capable of seeing (or, more precisely, of *feeling*), but since most have neither the desire nor the ability to reconcile them, it is best that most never experience them. A little learning goes a long way toward instigating a war within the soul that, for most people, will never come to an end. And they are certainly no better for it. Far from cultivating strength and courage in the multitude, superficial learning leads to a tired and torturous existence, a life lived vainly striving for an end, any end, to the war within them. And sadly (but inevitably), it ordinarily drives modern men to pursue baser comforts and baser pleasures, the only repose they know. But as Rousseau saw so clearly, this amounts only to "imaginary repose". It seems certain that most people's higher drives and higher longings will never have the strength required to win the war. For where a people's cave offers no consistent support to man's higher inclinations (as Sparta did through higher honors, for example), it is a losing battle.

Most importantly, perhaps, Rousseau attempts to warn the many away from philosophy in the name of the political order nature prescribes, or "the true or natural order (the absolute rule of the wise over the unwise)" (IR: p.288). What Strauss calls "the basic premise of classical political philosophy", that intellectual inequalities ought to be "of decisive political importance", is not only threatened by the Enlightenment and its attempt to conceal, even to eliminate, intellectual inequalities, but it is also threatened by the nature of modern liberal democracy. For it, too, assumes a premise positively hostile to the very principle underlying classical political philosophy. By establishing the political equality of all a polity's members, by teaching that an enlightened General Will admits the opinion of all, the rule of wisdom is overwhelmed by the rule of popular opinion, which quickly degenerates into but another sort of slavery, what Tocqueville called tyranny of a base majority.

Nonetheless, albeit reluctantly, Rousseau is a democrat. In fact, he considers himself the first true democratic theorist. In one of his last writings, the philosopher declares, "Up to the present the democratic Constitution has been poorly examined. All those who have spoken about it either did not know it, or took too little interest in it, or

had an interest in presenting it in a false light... The democratic Constitution is certainly the Masterpiece of the political art..." (LMn: 8.5).

Once again, the development of the sciences and the arts had forced Rousseau's hand. With the words "citizen" and "fatherland", the small, martial republics of antiquity were also artifacts of an earlier time by Rousseau's day. Given the realities of relations between states, there were only two realistic political alternatives: large polities ruled by one man, or l[illegible]es ruled by the many. But since new civil religions were no longer a possibility on account of the Enlightenment, and since the domineering spirit of Christianity had made slaves of men and had come to "pervade everything", the Republicanism which might once have contained a monarch's ambition by opposing the consolidation of temporal authority was no longer an effective way of suppressing a budding tyrant's aspirations. The fear of invisible spirits that once mitigated men's fear of violent death and, properly channeled, served to buttress his preference for an honorable life—what once amounted to a force capable of inspiring a people with a powerful desire to resist the usurpation of the legislative authority in the name of freedom, virtue, justice, whatever—had disappeared once and for all. In fact, the spirit of Christianity (which reigned throughout Europe) actually favored princes with tyrannical aspirations. By persuading Christians that their "fatherland is not of this world", by teaching "mildness" and "resignation" on earth, as Hobbes and Rousseau were both aware, Europe's religion was "too favorable to tyranny for tyranny not always to profit from it" (SC: 4.8.25-28).

And so, by attempting to annihilate man's fear of invisible spirits by promoting science and industry, and by reinterpreting scripture in the latter half of *Leviathan* to, as it were, "reunite the two heads of the eagle", Hobbes had demonstrated exactly how an oppressive tyrant might further dilute what remained of an otherwise useless religion to render it entirely subservient to political authority. The tyrant's rule is powerfully (and perhaps finally) solidified where men fear nothing other than violent death—neither damnation nor dishonor—and thus, public tranquility and the means to it become more important than freedom or virtue of any sort. It is important to consider the psychological effect of Hobbes' proposal—especially its effect on men and women who have a natural sense of nobility. Only because a scientific despotism (over thoroughly de-spirited

citizens) is even more horrifying than the rule of a base and narrowly self-interested majority, did Rousseau take it upon himself to finish what Hobbes had begun.

Once again, however, it must be recognized that Rousseau's primary concern is the defense of the possibility of philosophy—man's highest excellence. Since philosophy is practically impossible in a despotic regime that forcibly suppresses all opinions that might pose any threat to it, not in the interest of the public good but in the interest of a private or corporate will, political freedom must be preserved; in fact, where the virtue and freedom of the Spartan is no longer possible, it may be that political freedom is the indispensable requisite for the realization of those virtues, and whatever higher freedoms, remain realizable in modern times. But where so many factors have worked to destroy and debase "all that is sacred among men"—not only their religion, but even their very capacity for superstition and traditional religiosity—it is difficult to see how political freedom might effectively be protected.

"Opinion", it turns out, remains "queen of the world", even in enlightened modernity. Where the power of religious conviction has been thoroughly undermined, and with it, the political effectiveness of a polity's sacred beliefs, the polity's political education becomes even more critical to the defense of political freedom. This helps to explain Rousseau's curious (seemingly secular) use of the word "sacred" in the *Social Contract*. In sum, it might be said that Rousseau provides the political education Hobbes seems to have neglected. Although Hobbes did recognize that "the actions of men proceed from their opinions, and in the well governing of opinions consisteth the well governing of men's actions", his project essentially lays the foundation for a stable and powerfully democratic political science, but only with the addition of the political education—the new opinions and "sacred" dogma—that Rousseau provides in his *Social Contract* (Lev: 2.18.9). Without that salutary education, Rousseau is right to consider Hobbes' musings to be very dangerous dreams.

This may explain Rousseau's attempt to cultivate new (modern and democratic) convictions in Europeans, sacred opinions he intends to takes religion's place as a force capable of opposing the would-be despot in increasingly secular, and increasingly scientific times. No longer is God's word as transmitted by the Holy Bible most sacred. Instead, "the social order is a *sacred* right". He refers to "the sovereign power" as

"absolute, *sacred* and inviolable"; he argues "the person of the last citizen is as *sacred* and inviolable as that of the first magistrate"; he underlines the importance of "*sacred* tribunates that would never imagine usurping the functions of the people" arguing that "the tribunate is more *sacred* and revered than the prince because it defends the laws"; he contends the "social bond is broken in all hearts when the basest interest brazenly assumes the *sacred* name of public good"; and in the chapter on the dictatorship, we learn that one "should never suspend the *sacred* power of the laws except when the salvation of the fatherland is at stake" (My emphasis; SC: 1.1.2, 2.4.9, 3.14.1, 4.1.5, 4.5.3, 4.6.3). In short, Rousseau reserves the term "sacred" for the laws, the sovereign authority, and the General Will; in essence, the belief that the legislative authority resides in the people must become modernity's *sacred truth*—absolutely exempt from interrogation and graven in the hearts of men. Only once the multitude comes to believe as much—that is, once they come to believe all men are equal and equally endowed with the inviolable right to govern themselves—will Rousseau have replaced other-worldly religion with a potentially more effective check on the prince through the polity's political education.

The reestablishment of the sciences and the subsequent enlightenment meant that, for the first time, a polity's political education could no longer be identical to its religious education. Indeed, for the first time, a people's political education was espoused not from the pulpit, but from the polity's schools and universities—which is to say, from books other than, and generally at odds with, the Bible. It amounts to a change made necessary, but also made possible by technological development. And it is the advent of printing that, along with disseminating the dangerous dreams of Hobbes and Spinoza, has permitted the popularization of Rousseau's sacred dogmas. Indeed, it may not be going too far to assert that this true philosopher's "civil profession of faith"—essentially, a new moral code—has been instrumental to ensuring the West's political stability, and with it, its political freedom for over two centuries now.

But teaching men they have rights—specifically, the *sacred* right to rule—is not identical to teaching men their political duties. For rule of the majority according to the General Will can very quickly degenerate into rule of the majority according to the Will of All. The former, as Rousseau notes, "looks only to the common interest" but the latter, "looks to private interest, and is nothing but a sum of particular wills". As long as

members of the community "consider themselves a single body, they have but a single will, which is concerned with their common preservation, and the general welfare" (SC: 4.1.1). And as long as the polity remains simple, and the springs of the state remain vigorous, the General Will and Will of All *can* remain closely tied. But as Rousseau acknowledges, where the sciences and the arts have developed, inevitably, states enlarge beyond human scale, "the social knot begins to loosen", "particular interests begin to make themselves felt", and "small societies" begin to influence larger society; in short, a special problem emerges in modern (which is to say, "large") democracies insofar as "the general will is no longer the will of all", a problem that remains unsolved by this sacred dogma (SC: 4.1.4).

Rousseau certainly foresaw the dilemma Tocqueville so artfully underlines: namely, that political freedom is not necessarily guaranteed in any and every democracy. Tyranny of a majority, emboldened but not ennobled by Rousseau's political education—and usually led by the multitude's baser inclinations—is a grave threat to all democracies, and hence, to all democrats. To the extent a (democratic) revolution "against which it would neither be wise not desirable to struggle against" was sweeping Europe at the time Rousseau was writing, Tocqueville is almost certainly right that "a new political science was needed for a world altogether new", something only true philosophers would be able to provide (DA: p.7). But modern men needed more than just a political education; they needed a moral education as well. For in Rousseau's day, man was as immoral and self-indulgent in private as he was apathetic in public. Thus, teaching ordinary men they have the unalienable *right* to govern according to popular will, but neglecting to provide an adequate moral education to inform, or as least to restrain their normally self-interested wills, will never generate democratic polities governed by an enlightened General Will.

To appreciate the dilemma, consider *the* problem Rousseau's democratic political education does not solve, one innate to the very idea of a General Will—specifically, *what* it wills (cf. IR: p283). Man's *amour de soi* is, no doubt, innate. It emerges directly from our awareness of our existence, and our awareness of our individuality. Like beasts (though the "mechanism" is entirely different), human beings are naturally self-interested; we seek what we perceive to be good for us. This helps to prolong our existence, it facilitates reproduction, and it contributes to the survival of the species.

Precisely because most men are incapable of apprehending the truth, however, most cannot determine what is truly best for themselves; in Rousseau's words, "one always wants one's good, but one does not always see it" (SC: 2.3.1). Thus, even where the General Will is not "subordinated" to private interests, it does not necessarily (nor even generally) follow that the General Will be genuinely enlightened. Rousseau asks, "How will a blind multitude, which often does not know what it wills because it rarely knows what is good for it, carry out an undertaking as great, as difficult as a system of legislation?" Answer: ordinarily it doesn't. In all times, men must be taught, even forced, to become (and to remain) good and free. Rousseau rightly perceives that

> [t]he general will is always upright, but the judgment which guides it is not always enlightened. It must be made to see objects as they are, sometimes as they should appear to it, shown the good path which it is seeking, secured against seduction by particular wills bring together places and times within its purview, weigh the appeal of the present, perceptible advantages against the danger of remote hidden evils. Individuals see the good they reject, the public wills the good it does not see. All are equally in need of guides: The first must be obligated to conform their wills to their reason; the other must be taught to know what it wills... Hence arises the necessity of a Lawgiver (SC: 2.6.10).

In modern times, the Lawgiver's task is somewhat different than it was for Lycurgas, Numa, or Moses, all of whom were able to resort to the power invisible spirits already *had* over men who *were* then naturally superstitious. Today, the people need an authoritative moral education to replace what religion can no longer provide—this, in addition to their new political education. It may be that Rousseau intended *Emile*, published within a week of the *Social Contract*, to contribute to this personal moral education.

To return, then, to what initially seemed an insoluble problem—the successful reconciliation of the principle underlying ancient politics (the absolute rule of the wise) and the very nature of modern democratic politics (the absolute political equality, and supposed intellectual equality, of every citizen)—is now a more promising endeavor. After all, men and their *mores* are ruled and determined by customs, convictions, and "above all", by their opinions—what amounts, once again, to Rousseau's fourth "most important of all" sort of law. As Rousseau reveals in the *Social Contract*, however, this

is in fact "a part [of the laws] unknown to our politicians but on which the success of all the [other laws] depends: a part to which the great Lawgiver attends in secret..." (SC: 2.12.5). Having acknowledged the success of the political education Rousseau attended to in secret in his *Social Contract*—persuading people of their "sacred right" to self-rule—one can ask what might be accomplished in the "moral" sphere were a polity's art and literature to be directed by "true philosophy".

Answering this question requires that one return to what Rousseau means by "true philosophy". If its first distinguishing characteristic is, as we have seen, that its worthy practitioners are motivated not by the esteem of the many ordinary men, but by their own esteem as it arises from their personal comparisons with previous "true philosophers", then perhaps it can be said that a true philosopher's second distinguishing characteristic arises out of—is effectively made possible by—the first. Precisely because they are not enslaved to the approbation of the many (awarded according to what pleases them), what is genuinely useful to the multitude *can be* the object of the true philosophers' defining activity, or at least, of what they publish for popular consumption.

On this most important question—"what is philosophy"—an early variant of the discourse's very first sentence includes a clause Rousseau understandably omitted from the version he submitted to the Academy. Indeed, it seems to confirm that Rousseau means to attack not only contemporary sophists but also a large number of previously reputed "lovers of wisdom", men whom he later in the discourse likens to "a troop of charlatans, each crying from his own spot on a public square" (FD: δ58). The great [grande] and beautiful [belle] question he goes on to undertake (in the discourse, and throughout his literary career) is « *fort différente par son importance* de ces subtilités métaphysique qui ont gagné touttes les parties de la Littérature... » ["*very different by its importance* than those metaphysical subtleties that have prevailed in all parts of Literature..."] (DSA: p137). Taken together with his later indictment of larger ontological questions and purely theoretical investigation, perhaps Rousseau means to imply that "true philosophy" is not just neutral (as a truly idle thinker would be), but that it *must be useful* to the state (in modern times, perhaps useful to all humanity); or that at least, the sort of philosophy he engages in is "very different by its importance" precisely

because he is always aware of, and always principally concerned with, the political implications of his philosophizing.

It cannot be denied that Rousseau chooses to focus on the overtly political aspects of political philosophy, almost to the exclusion of the larger metaphysical questions that had more or less completely occupied many of those philosophers who came before, and would come to occupy many who came afterward. (The very fact that one can ask whether Rousseau ever espouses *a metaphysics* is quite revealing, though it is certainly not to say he did not have one).[31] The philosopher learned very early what it seems many of his contemporaries never grasped—that one can "do evil while endlessly talking about wisdom" (PN: δ9). In the end, Rousseau's exceptional indifference to men's esteem and the rather unique nature of his *amour propre* may be the prerequisite for his "love for humanity". It permitted him to speak (or not speak) of wisdom—to speak (or not speak) the truth—not for the sake of others' esteem, not for the sake of instigating discussion regarding metaphysical subtleties irrelevant to the well-governing of the polity (though doubtless downright seductive to a man of his ability), but only of those truths useful to his audience.

It is his uniquely pure love for other men and for posterity that drove Rousseau to speak carefully, then, and to attempt thereby to do only good. For as he puts it in his *Letter to Beaumont*,

> I sought the truth in books; I found only lies and error there. I consulted Authors. I found only Charlatans, who make a game of deceiving men, with no other Law than their interest, no other God than their reputation... All public instruction will always tend to lies as long as those who direct it find lying to be in their interest, and it is only for them that the truth is not good to state. Why would I be the accomplice of those people... For myself, I have promised to speak [the truth] in every useful thing as long as it is in me. It is a commitment I have had to fulfill according to my talent (LB: p.52).

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[31] There is no reason to suspect that Rousseau disagrees with Socrates' suggestions that kingly men must consider ontological and metaphysical questions in order to rule well. Indeed, it may be that the apprehending "the greatest good" and comprehending what "virtue and vice" truly consist of, are indispensable to the best political rule; Rousseau may even agree that the "last thing to be seen… [is] the idea of the good… and that the man who is going to act prudently in private or in public must see it." Granting this much (especially if these questions and the answers to them are permanent), does not necessarily license public and open consideration of what remain potentially polity-damaging questions.

Rousseau expands on this theme in his *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Though a self-declared "friend of truth", he explains why he cannot always express it. In fact, the philosopher explains why he must sometimes conceal "the truth of the facts"; in Rousseau's words, "it would certainly be my desire to substitute at least a moral truth for the truth of the facts, that is to say, to portray effectively the affections natural to the human heart and always to set forth some useful instruction, to make of them, in a word, moral tales or allegories..." (RSW: p.35). He later adds,

> it follows that the commitment I made to truthfulness is founded more on feelings of uprightness and equity than on the reality of things, and in that practice I have more readily followed the moral dictates of my conscience than abstract notions of the true and the false. I have frequently concocted fables, but very rarely lied... (RSW: p.39).

Thus, usefulness (to the polity, to humanity) becomes the most important standard, governing what one submits for publication. Therefore, the factual truth can be obscured, even hidden, without a philosopher's being morally culpable for having lied in the ordinary sense (IR: p.271). For insofar as "moral truths" do not always fully correspond to the factual truth (especially since the requirements of morality will vary greatly between peoples and polities according to particular situations and historical circumstances, whereas *the truth* is eternal), Rousseau's preference for political (including moral) utility offers a powerful justification for misleading the public where it benefits ordinary men.

The philosopher comes close to stating as much explicitly with regard to human religion. In a letter to the Archbishop of Paris, Rousseau notes that there are "two ways to examine and compare the various Religions. One is according to what is true and false in them... The other is according to their temporal and moral effects on earth, according to the good or evil they can do for society and the human race" (LB: p.54) Not to dwell on the philosopher's contention that Christianity fails on both scores, Rousseau goes on to imply the second ought take precedence: "It seems certain, however, I admit, that *if*

man is made for society, the truest religion is also the most social and the most humane" (My Emphasis; LB: p.54).[32]

Ironically, then, moral truthfulness and uprightness demands that true philosophers, friends of the truth and humanity, *lie* to the public for the sake of human sociability and the happiness of mankind; in other words, the whole truth can be useful only when concealed from ordinary men. Post-enlightenment, in a world where the force of religion had been diluted, men like Rousseau must make use of the only other medium that moves men, not by attempting (rationally) to *convince* them ("it is mankind's fate that reason shows us the goal, and the passions divert us from it"), but by attempting to *persuade* them by moving their passions (PN: δ8; cf. SC: 2.7.9). Only where a powerful alliance between science and art is established—or more precisely, only where art is ruled by philosophy—can this be accomplished. Rousseau's moral truthfulness, for instance, demanded that he concoct salutary "allegories" and "moral tales". It is therefore possible that elements of his *Confessions* and his other so-called autobiographical writings (and more obviously, his fictional writings) were actually concocted specifically to serve some character-enhancing or otherwise life-improving purpose.

A great difficulty presents itself, however—one to which only true philosophy can craft an appropriate response. What is truly useful? What truths ought be revealed, and what moral tales, what fictions, should be concocted and disseminated through art to conceal certain aspects of the true nature of things? (The more practical side of the question—how this might be achieved—is also a question best left to true philosophers with great literary talents). Rousseau well appreciates that "very often, what is to one person's advantage is to another person's prejudice... Must the truth which profits one person while harming another be kept quiet or uttered?" (RSW: p.31). But practicing esotericism is only part of the answer—perhaps even the easier part. For speaking to two audiences is one thing; determining what would be useful to (and effective on) the larger audience that cannot bear the truth, is another thing altogether.

It may be that this second question can only be answered in light of what a given audience can become. As a result, the advice Montaigne provides in his essay, *Of the*

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[32] On Rousseau's account, if men are social by nature, Christianity is neither true nor humane (in spite of its emphasis on compassion; See note 16 above).

Inequality that is Between us, may well be essential. "Nothing is evaluated except by its own qualities", he asserts; "we praise a horse because it is vigorous and skillful... why do we not likewise judge a man by what is his own?"Of Inequality The metaphor is an old one, and just as horses can be bred for different purposes and with the aim of augmenting entirely different qualities or excellences, so are there different kinds of human excellence. But before a moral education can be fitted to modern man, it is necessary that one "take[] off [man's] trappings [in order] to see him bare and uncovered." Having acknowledged this, there is a second important variable—namely, what men currently are, or the point of departure. And so, what man can become depends not only on what we are "bare and uncovered" (what we were in our primitive state), but what we currently are: barbaric or bourgeois, for instance.

True Philosophy and True Art for the Benefit and Happiness of Mankind

And so, having restored (as best he could), the dignity of philosophy, Rousseau has gone a long way toward restoring the dignity of man. For his philosophy has helped to reveal what the reestablishment of science and art has meant for mankind. Europe is now one and thoroughly civilized which means new and barbaric peoples are no longer being born. As Rousseau appreciated, this necessarily affects what Europeans can become. Hence, the next question: what *can* modern Europe's modern bourgeois men and women be made to become?

Some say *Emile*, the philosopher's prescriptions for education in a thoroughly modern world, proposes one solution.[33] If it is true that the most important part of any work, especially a work on education, is its beginning, then it is certainly significant that a work alternately titled *On Education* begins by returning to the an analogy between education and agriculture.[34] "Plants are shaped by cultivation, and men by education...

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[33] Allan Bloom, for instance, contends that *Emile* is one of those rare and total or synoptic books, a book with which one can live and which becomes deeper as one becomes deeper, a book comparable to Plato's *Republic*, which it is meant to rival or supercede... *Emile* is written to defend man against a great threat which bids fair to cause a permanent debasement of the species, namely, the inevitable universal dominance of a certain low human type which Rousseau was the first to isolate and name: the *bourgois* (Emile: p.3).

[34] Earlier the analogy had been between philosophy and agriculture. As it turns out, one of the major functions of philosophy, on Rousseau's account, is the establishment of a salutary curriculum, or most beautiful treatise on education, for the public.

Everything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education" (Emile: p.38). *What is the goal of education?* Rousseau continues, "It is the very same as that of nature" (Emile: p.38)

But nature no longer speaks to men; this is the modern predicament. The reign of his base inclinations incited the haphazard development of the sciences and the arts—what gave man a history in the place of almost everything natural about him—and thus little, if anything, remains to guide his development properly. Where everything is guided by the unrestrained reign of man's passions, the knowledge men accumulate and transmit to their progeny is misused; in Rousseau's words, "the more new knowledge we accumulate, the more we deprive ourselves of the means of acquiring the most important knowledge of all... it is, by dint of studying man that we have made ourselves incapable of knowing him" (SD: preface δ2). Children's education, directed as it is (like everything else) by low passion and fashionable opinions contrived to justify them, grows ever baser, and with it, so do men and women. For where nature no longer provides a higher standard, whatever gives men and women pleasure they call "good", and so the satisfaction of their desires becomes the primary object of their pursuits—just as Hobbes imagined.

As a result, it is certainly not what nature prescribes for human beings that directs modern curriculas for the education of our young. Indeed, sophisticated notions of what egalitarian ideology demands has taken the place of virtually every *natural* standard. The result: seeing man "bare and uncovered" becomes difficult, almost to the point of impossible. For with the further development of modern science and art, the human soul, (like the image of the statue of Glaucus Rousseau invokes in the *Second Discourse*), is "altered in the bosom of society by a thousand continually renewed causes, by the acquisition of a mass of knowledge and errors, by changes that occurred in the constitution of bodies, and by the continual impact of the passions..." (SD: Preface δ1). To be sure, it still stands today, but debased by our excesses, almost beyond recognition for what it is. In the place of that natural, primitive and majestic simplicity—the true unity of soul—Rousseau's pure and noble savage exemplified, today one observes a man who is divided and disfigured by the artificial demands of his modern cave. Tragically, what passes for a moral and political education today, not only fails to counter the

pernicious influence of man's unbridled passions, but what is worse, it accentuates them by glorifying license. As the species continues to "progress", actually to degenerate, the statue continues to be assaulted: old parts of his body are broken off, others are ground down and thoroughly maimed, while at the same time, foreign elements grow onto the statue (cf. Rep: 611d). The development of human science and art has given man a history and his history has permitted gradual changes to his very form. If modern man, what man has become, is one's point of departure and where the study of man begins, it becomes almost impossible to imagine what mankind can become. With the help of a new and elevating culture (were true philosophers to direct its development), it may well be possible to restore, polish, even to beautify mankind as one might a statue, but where old pieces have been broken off and new ones have grown in, separating the natural elements from the artificial ones becomes a complex and difficult undertaking.

By the time Rousseau was writing, (and things have only deteriorated further in the centuries since), increasingly Hobbesian political arrangements in Europe had permitted the restoration of scientific pursuit, which served to stifle nature's voice. Thus, near the beginning of the *First Discourse*, Rousseau observes a grand, beautiful, and especially difficult sight, one made necessary, even as it was made possible, by the renewal of philosophy in modern times: to see man "come back to himself to study man and know his nature, his duties, and end" (FD: δ7) The *First Discourse* establishes why theoretical investigation, properly pursued, has become more indispensable than ever. For through philosophy, (and only through philosophy), an imagined portrait of perfected man can be established to serve as the model art and education properly conceived should work to realize. Near the beginning of his *Second Discourse*, Rousseau admits that "it is no light undertaking to separate what is original from what is artificial in the present nature of man, and to know correctly a state which no longer exists, which perhaps never existed, which probably never will exist, and about which it is nevertheless necessary to have precise notions in order to judge our present state correctly" (SD: preface δ4). In order to ground on new foundations what nature, now obscured by human art, prescribes, the philosopher is surely right to warn: he who attempts to "reach the end" of the road down which Rousseau has begun "[will] need even more philosophy than is generally thought" (SD: preface δ4). *Even more philosophy than is generally thought*, and in the

end, all for the sake of knowing man's nature such that he can be cultivated to realize some approximation of the virtuous, free, undivided and happy state nature prescribes for him. This, Rousseau maintains, is the end of "true philosophy".

Anywhere philosophy and the arts are practiced in the manner they were in Rousseau's time, however, they can accomplish little to improve mankind's lot and do much to aggravate it. Nonetheless, Rousseau holds that "when the people is corrupted, the theatre is good for it", because even artists who are irreparably bound to the public's esteem can effectively divert the energies of an otherwise vicious populace (Ld'A: p.65). It seems to be an invincible tendency of human history: a people progresses from barbarism, to civilization, perhaps manifesting virtue for some comparatively short time, but eventually the sciences and the arts emerge fuelled as they always are by the riches generated by growing economic inequalities, and once the people becomes soft and decadent, all hope for wholesale reform is apparently lost. On this account, "a people's *mores* are like a man's honor; they are a treasure to be preserved, but which cannot be recovered once lost" (PN: δ34). Living in a mainly decadent, increasingly bourgeois century—a century without honor, as it were—the philosopher advocates the careful support of Academies, Colleges, Universities, Libraries, "and all other amusements". But in his *Preface to Narcissus*, he claims they can only be useful to "distract men's wickedness" because even "in a land where honest folk and good *mores* no longer count, it would still be preferable to live among scoundrels than among bandits" (PN: δ36).

To be sure, the *Preface to Narcissus* is an especially pessimistic work. In essence, it argues that it is best if those yet-uncommitted crimes that dwell deep in men's hearts stay there, that the fantasy world of the theatre is useful only insofar as it can divert men's attentions (if only temporarily), and that little more can be accomplished through art in manifestly degenerate times. It is difficult not to wonder whether this really represents what Rousseau, an accomplished concocter of moral tales, really believes? To answer this question, one must consider why Rousseau belatedly appended a preface to a play long since published. On his own account, he is discussing not so much the play, as he is its author, one who was unduly influenced by the furious aberrations of a young and foolish heart. Rousseau has no problem admitting that *Narcissus* was a bad play, a work irreparably tarnished by its author's desire to be what his cave honored most. But *even*

the work of men "long seduced by the prejudices of [their] century" can be defended in modern times: since

> [i]t is no longer a matter of getting people to do good, but only of distracting them from doing evil; they must be kept busy with trifles to divert them from evil deeds; they must be entertained rather than sermonized. If my writings have edified the small number of good [people], then I have done them all the good it was in my power to do… When morals are no more, one has to think exclusively in terms of the polity; and it is well enough known that Music and Theater are among its most important concerns" (PN: δ37).

As it turns out, Rousseau defends his *Narcissus* for the same reasons the plays of Molière and Corneille can be permitted in a sick regime despite the harm they would cause a good one. They promise to occupy the rich and opulent, render the wretched less mischievous, distract the many miserable, make the people forget the incompetence of their political leaders, help all to maintain "taste" once decency is lost, and cover the "ugliness" of vice grown nearly ubiquitous (Ld'A: p.64). Put simply, in Europe, the malady had already taken over. Things could not get much worse, and so disguising or covering the symptoms was the best that could be hoped for. But since Rousseau also insists that *Narcissus* does not represent his later thought, that as such, "it would be wrong, to say the least, to accuse [him] on [his play and his early poetry's] account of having contradicted principles [he] did not yet hold", and that he "no longer thinks as did" the man who wrote those early works, it is at least possible that his opinion regarding the public usefulness of the fictional writings he composed (or concocted) after *Narcissus* might be entirely different (PN δ9). As Rousseau himself insisted, the principles he establishes in the *First Discourse* change everything, most importantly perhaps, his understanding of what true philosophy requires of those who engage in it.[35]

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[35] In his *Letter to Malesherbes*, Rousseau describes a truly momentous occasion: the genesis of the thesis underlying the *First Discourse*, and perhaps his entire ("mature") corpus.

> I fell upon the question posed by the Academy of Dijon which gave rise to my first work. If ever anything has resembled the experience of an inspiration, it was the stirring that went on in me when I read it; all of a sudden I felt my spirit [« esprit »] fill with a thousand insights [« lumières »]; crowds of lively ideas presented themselves at once with a force and a confusion that threw me into indescribable disarray; I felt my head taken over by a giddiness [or excitement; « étordissement »] much like drunkenness (My Translation; OC: 1.1135).

And since he insists that he never departs from the principles he establishes in his first important work, it must be assumed that his final word on the usefulness of a work like *Narcissus*, which he considered to be a very bad play, is not his final word on the usefulness of all literature and all art, especially that which chances to be composed by men who share his conception of philosophy and its proper end.

Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that Rousseau, who wrote two novels after the *First Discourse* one of which he considered his best work, holds a very different opinion. Where *Narcissus* and the plays Rousseau crucifies in his *Letter to d'Alembert* can do little but distract a base populace by making virtues long since abandoned laughable and the passions irresistible, Rousseau agrees with Montaigne that "the task of good men is to portray virtue as beautiful as possible" (LR: δ49*n*). Indeed, by writing for two audiences in the *First Discourse* and elsewhere—for the non-philosophic majority, but also to those few philosophic and gentle men who, like Rousseau, "want[] to live beyond [their] century" even if it means "universal blame" in their time—indicates that he intends his literary efforts to inspire and to direct the energies of men who can accomplish much more than the cave-bound author of *Narcissus* accomplished. He hopes to enthuse in those few naturally suited to cultivate letters, the firmness of soul not to yield to "the spirit of [their] times" even if it means dying "in poverty and oblivion" (FD: δ2, δ46). Thus, it may be that true philosophers like Rousseau, insofar as they understand the demanding requirements of true art, are, in fact, a necessary requisite for the emergence of genuinely useful art.

"At all times there will be men destined to be subjugated by the opinions of their century, their country, their society"—if there is one invincible characteristic of history, this is it, for it is written in the nature of man (FD: δ2). Most are, and always will be moved by their passions. The multitude will never become philosophic or genuinely enlightened—which is to say, their actions will never be determined by sound rational evaluation alone—but the objects of the passions which will forever determine them can be affected by mankind's most rational men.

Rousseau adds that the this moment of inspiration provided the beginnings of the *First Discourse*, the *Second Discourse*, and *On Education* or *Emile*, three works which he insists must be studied together.

Arrived here, perhaps it is possible to answer a question Rousseau poses near the end of this first of his important writings. "O virtue! Sublime science of simple souls, are so many difficulties and preparations needed to know you?" (FD: δ62). Rousseau's answer, Socrates' answer, and the answer all true philosophers supply for those readers they care most about, turns out to be *yes*. In fact, the discourse's best readers are supposed to conclude that it is a question they may never completely answer, that virtue may be something never truly and fully *known*. The philosophers surely intend to indicate by their example that the long road to virtue is a difficult one, and that it begins with the recognition of one's ignorance, however.

Ordinary readers, on the contrary, are supposed to draw the opposite conclusion. For them, virtue will be hard, and it will require much practice, but there should never be any question but that they *know* it. *Opinion* takes the place of knowledge for these men. It is not that virtue's principles are not "engraved in all hearts"; indeed, most people know in their hearts that a community without murder, theft, fraud, and rape is a better place to live, and most recognize this for reasons beyond naked self-interest. Nonetheless, few will ever "commune with oneself and listen to the voice of one's conscience in the silence of the passions" honestly enough that they will come to *know* virtue (FD: δ62). As a result, they must be taught by the very few who have the energy and the will to do so. The polity's education, its honors, and thus, its opinions and *mores* must set men on the path toward virtue by influencing their passions in a salutary way. "That is true philosophy", according to Rousseau (FD: δ62). Wise men seek to *know* virtue, wise and good men endeavor to teach an achievable approximation of it to the rest of mankind.

There is a certain irony, then, in the last words of this work. Speaking to his kindred—fellow friends of truth and of humanity—Rousseau exhorts, "let us know how to be satisfied with [true philosophy]; and without envying the glory of those famous men immortalized in the republic of letters, let us try to put between *them* and *us* that glorious distinction noted between two great peoples long ago; that the one knew how to speak well, the other to act well" (My Emphasis; FD: δ62). The "us", Rousseau and the future "true philosophers" for whom this work was written are likened to the Spartans—men who knew how "to act well". Ironically, in modern times, their actions will be more akin

to what made "them" famous—a handful of Athenians who "knew how to speak well" and who are now "immortalized in the republic of letters"—than their actions will be similar to what the Spartans are (collectively) remembered for. The greatest thoughts and the great literary works *are* the greatest actions—this is especially true for us today. What Rousseau means to warn friends and allies is that by acting well (by making public utility their standard), they abandon any hope of literary acclaim, especially in their time.

Rousseau admits he is a "greater admirer than anyone" when it comes to artistic talent—in particular, Molière's. But Molière used his talents badly; his theatre is "a school of vices and bad *mores*" (Ld'A: p.34). Can such ability be used well... used *usefully* for the sake of the political community and the men who make it up? Might Rousseau attend Molière's plays religiously to learn his art? Speaking explicitly of "the purpose" behind his own post-discourse literature, in *Julie*, the philosopher implies he has (been forced to) put his own talents to much different use, to "useful" or salutary use (Julie: notice). And interestingly, his great works of fiction are not plays, as *Narcissus* had been. Turning to the preface of a post-discourse work of fiction, then, Rousseau's first words in *Julie* are quite revealing. "Great cities must have theatres; and corrupt peoples, Novels. I have seen the morals of my times, and I have published these letters. Would I had lived in an age when I should have thrown them into the fire."Julie: first preface

Rousseau's polity—indeed, Rousseau's Europe—was very sick. But there was no possibility of going back to the ways and *mores* of the small martial republics of antiquity that he seems to prefer. And so, as Strauss notes, "he believed... that in a corrupt society, like the one in which he lived, the diffusion of philosophic knowledge can no longer be harmful" (NRH: p.260). Indeed, perhaps it had become essential. In the *Second Preface* to *Julie*, he asks, "in times of epidemic and contagion, when everyone is infected from infancy, should one prevent the sale of drugs beneficial to the sick, under the pretext that they could harm the healthy?" (Julie: p.18). Similarly, at the end of one of his last letters regarding the *First Discourse*, Rousseau goes so far as to declare that "the time has come to speak openly, I will overcome my distaste and for once write for the People" (PSLB: δ10). But the letter ends a short paragraph later without revealing very much; in fact, he

takes the opportunity to reiterate that he is moved by his love for truth and for humanity, that some sophisms are "doubly dangerous to the multitude".

Although modernity has come to the point that philosophy promises more good than it threatens harm, we will never reach the point where philosophers can or should write altogether openly. Rousseau, like all great philosophers and novelists, wrote for posterity. And he wrote because he thought that things might eventually improve. In fact, it seems he thought his writings might even help. The philosopher imagines that the modern novel might serve, if not as a cure, then at least as a palliative for the modern malaise. Modern men will never become Spartans, but they can become good enough to lead a fulfilling and satisfying life if they can be persuaded that the price of imaginary repose is incredibly high—Parisian decadence and opulence costs men the possibility of true happiness and their one chance at leading a meaningful existence.

Thus, the arts and letters can be useful—in fact, very useful—in modern and degenerate times. But again, Rousseau defends not the arts in general, but arts and letters undertaken well. *Julie*'s *Second Preface*, written even before the letters that actually constitute the work, includes a passage in which Rousseau manages to convince an unnamed "man of letters" that his novel can do much good for *some* modern men if, but only if, the very purpose of literature is reexamined. As the reformed man of letters is made to appreciate,

> in order to give works of imagination the only usefulness they can have, they should be directed toward an end opposite to the one their authors intend; set aside everything artificial; bring everything back to nature; give men the love of a regular and simple life; cure them of the whims of opinion; restore their taste for true pleasures; make them love solitude and peace; keep them at some distance from each other; and instead of inciting them to pile into the Cities, motivate them to spread themselves evenly across the territory to invigorate its every part... I further understand that it's not a matter of making them into... illustrious Peasants tilling their fields with their own hands and philosophizing about nature; but of demonstrating to well-to-do people that rustic life and agriculture offer pleasures they cannot know..." (Julie: p.15).

It could be said that the *First Discourse* attempts to teach ordinary men the same thing—it certainly contains the same themes—but the discourse does not speak in a

language appropriate to the task. Its praise of virtue before common men is too academic and its anticipated audience much too sophisticated. Even so, it cannot be doubted that the discourse establishes exactly why novels like Rousseau's are so necessary in modern times. Mankind's moral *re*education is therefore left to *Emile* and *Julie*; the discourses and the *Social Contract* are meant for men more like Rousseau.

For it takes a man with the insights of a true philosopher and a special poetic ability to write books like *Emile* and *Julie*. They must combat modern prejudices and opinions—in particular the modern notions that attract men and women to cities like Paris in which public honor can play no role in this moral *re*education.[36] Rousseau looks for allies: "Human happiness demands that *we* try to halt this torrent of poisoned maxims... the citizen who is concerned about [men] should not foolishly exhort us with *Be Good*; but make us love the estate that helps us do so" (My Emphasis; Julie: p.14).[37] The description, *Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps* adorns *Julie*'s title page. And for good reason, as Rousseau explains. Books like his "must combat and destroy the maxims of large societies; they must expose them as false and contemptible, that is, as they really are" (Julie: p.15). For where communities are small and "closely knit", Rousseau rightly observes that "styles and characters become more like each other, and that friends, confounding their souls, also confound their manners of thinking, of feeling, and of speaking" (Julie: p.21) Again, our *amour propre*, fuelled as it is by the comparisons we draw and the evaluations we make on the basis of those who surround us, is responsible for the best in mankind. Where men and women compare themselves to good and great examples, many will make themselves better—if not to deserve their own esteem, then at least to acquire that of their fellows. Providing

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[36] Consider note 20 in this connection.

[37] Recall Rousseau's trenchant criticism of Voltaire, who sacrificed the "vigorous and strong beauties" he had the talent to create as a result of his petty vanity (FD: δ45; see page __ above). Consider also Rousseau's (only half-sardonic) plea for Voltaire's help—whose *talents* Rousseau honors most among his contemporaries—in his endeavor to influence the public's *mores* with respect to religious tolerance: "I passionately wish you might be willing to undertake this work and to adorn it with your poetry, so that from childhood on, everyone being able to learn it easily, it might instill in all hearts those sentiments of gentleness and humanity which shine in your writings, and which the devout have always lacked" (LV: δ35). It might be said that Voltaire was partially useful in that he was a leading, and very popular, advocate for religious tolerance. His novel *Candide* and his *Treaty on Tolerance* were both widely read and harshly critical of religious extremism.

such models becomes the great task; Rousseau's Julie, "such, as she is, must be an enchantress; everyone who comes near her is bound to resemble her; everyone about her is bound to become Julie..." (Julie: p.21).[38]

Depicting women like Julie who are able to enchant and seduce is particularly difficult in modern times. Largely as a result of a scientific education that has recently shaken men, women and their capacity to imagine anything that may not be literally real, great literature has lost much of its capacity to affect men and women in an elevating way. Rousseau's contemporary "man of letters" exemplifies this problem; upon first having read *Julie*, declares, "I've never seen such a bad piece of work... the characters are people from the other world." Rousseau's answer is characteristic, "Then I am sorry for this one", but he does not give up—which is also quite characteristic (Julie: p.7). Eventually, Rousseau helps to reform his opinion. It is meant to be an indication that there *is* hope for mankind. Drawing on our own experience, Rousseau means to show us what men and women can become. "Do you know how vastly Men differ from one another? How opposite characters can be? To what degree morals, prejudices, vary with the times, places, eras? Who is daring enough to assign such exact limits to Nature, and assert: Here is as far as man can go, and no further?" (Julie: p.7).

Perhaps it can be answered that Rousseau is one of a very small number of philosophers who does not. His contention in the *Second Discourse* that man and mankind are plastic, that individuals and the species are *perfectible*, is a truly radical turn. *Perfectible* implies two things: that the species can change—that it can move, or be moved—but that any movement is movement toward or away from a *telos*. For it also implies a conception of perfect, in this case, one that can be derived from the starting point Rousseau posits in the *Second Discourse*. The "embryonic" state from which

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[38] It would seem that by creating Julie, a new model for a modern audience, Rousseau is acting on some of the *First Discourse*'s most emphatic advice. It is worth repeating what Rousseau had noted in his discussion regarding the moral poverty of his century's art and contemporary artists. "We do not adequately suspect the advantages that would result for society if a better education were given to that half of the human race which governs the other... if you want [men] to become great and virtuous, teach women what greatness of soul and virtue are" (FD: δ45*n*). In his *Last Reply*, Rousseau is so bold as to assert, "certain it is that women alone could restore honor and probity among us", adding in his *Letter to d'Alembert* that major social reform is virtually impossible "without bringing about the intervention of women, on whom men's way of thinking in large measure depends" (LR: δ12*n*; L'dA: p.71-2).

Rousseau departs there—solitary natural man—is a state memorable for its portrayal of a man who is entirely self-sufficient, and thus, perfectly free. By investigating that "pure" state ("which perhaps never existed"), Rousseau has provided a standard against which polities can be judged, but also, one which can direct the development of future polities, even the future of the species, in light of his account of what nature prescribes for men. That standard may well reduce to freedom (which turns out to be the requisite of true happiness), but since the natural inequalities between men and their respective historical situations will never cease to effect what a particular man living in a particular time can become, the philosopher elucidates different sorts of freedom and human excellence.

Might it be the case that the best men can hope for in radically modern times are small communities within larger states, communities that might promote old-fashioned virtue and moral freedom to the extent the larger association permits the smaller ones political freedom adequate to the establishment of their own *mores*, their own opinions, and their own conceptions of what is noble and honorable? Rousseau implies that a return to wholesome community living in associations of human scale within polities of modern scale can help restore the color to the lives and loves of modern men and women: "everything around them will seem to take on a more cheerful outlook; their duties will become nobler in their eyes; they will rediscover their taste for the pleasures of nature: its true sentiments will be reborn in their hearts, and seeing happiness close at hand, they will learn to appreciate it" (Julie: p.17).[39]

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[39] If one were to judge the success of Rousseau's moral reeducation on the basis of the current state of youth and love in our modern world, it would be hard to conclude Rousseau's (moral) project has been a success. It can be argued that the further development of science—especially, the invention of female contraception—is largely responsible for the end of courtship, and with it, the end of any impetus for most men to be great or virtuous. Indeed, where women can pursue men for pleasure (sex) alone, which is to say, without any concern for whether their (play-) mate will make a good husband or father, superficial qualities (connected more to what pleases more than to what is virtuous) come to be honored, and men will make of themselves what they believe women want. Nonetheless, though *Emile* (and *Julie*) were written expressly for the public, as Allan Bloom notes (of *Emile* specifically), "[o]f Rousseau's major works it is the one least studied and commented on. It is as though the book's force had been entirely spent on impact with men like Kant and Schiller" (Emile: p.4). A study undertaken to determine the reasons behind *Emile*'s "loss of favor" with ordinary men and women, would, no doubt be interesting as Bloom suggests. Indeed, in our time, it may be essential.

Incidentally, a work with which Rousseau was very familiar may allude to one possible reason *Emile* may not have been as successful as the philosopher no doubt hoped it would be. In *Discourse on Method*, Descartes admits to having held oratory and poetry in high regard, and

Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine large cities will disappear—neither in the short term, nor in the large term—and it is probably best that they do not in the final analysis. For large cities full of cosmopolitan influences provide an escape for the rare but lofty natures that cannot help but see beyond their polity's walls and its ways—a place where their philosophizing cannot harm the manners and *mores* of the polity. Rousseau left Geneva for Paris. And there, society, academies, universities, letters, libraries—all made possible by the reestablishment of the sciences and the arts on Hobbesian foundations—serve philosophic men well by providing an abundance of alternatives and what Plato called patterns (cf. Rep: 557e). Rousseau hopes such men will ultimately find honorable asylum in the courts of political rulers. It is "the only recompense worthy of them: that of contributing by their influence to the happiness of the people to whom they have taught wisdom" (FD: δ60).

Paris is the place where philosophers can be truly idle, that is, if they are not (or until they are) finally persuaded to become "true philosophers", determined by "moral truthfulness" thanks to the education Rousseau and others reserve for their best readers. What is more, perhaps the approximation of the pure natural freedom exemplified by a solitary walker—a freedom, a tranquility of soul, and a self-sufficiency attainable even in society—is the highest kind of freedom and excellence available to any man living in any time. Paris also represents the place where young and bourgeoning philosophic natures can cultivate their talents without causing their polity any harm. Rousseau was a solitaire within living within society. Ironically, he was a solitaire living amidst the bustle of a giant city that never slept. He was a philosopher who derived his own happiness from an unusual self-sufficiency impossible in a small community, but at once, from serving the largest community: humanity.

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even makes a distinction between those "who possess the strongest reasoning" and "those who have the most pleasing rhetorical devices and who know to express themselves with the most embellishment and sweetness". While Descartes implies that these abilities are "fruits of study" and not "gifts of the mind" as he had originally suspected, the fact that he "completely abandoned the study of letters" in favor of philosophy the moment he could, may be revealing (DM: p.4-5) Perhaps the difference between an artist's talents and philosophic genius does lie in "gifts of the mind". In this connection, one recalls Socrates' examination of the poets in Plato's *Apology*. He learned that "they do not make what they make by wisdom, but by some sort of nature and while inspired" (Apology: 22c). The "admiration" Rousseau professes for Molière's talents and Voltaire's poetic ability may also be explained thus (Ld'A: p34; LV: δ33).

Rousseau would always maintain that "love of the public good"—a "passion"—caused him to take up his pen, and at the same time, to speak directly to the public. He even asserted that "no one, perhaps, loves his country and his compatriots as much as [he does]" (Obs: δ26). Rousseau's compatriots are modern Europeans—the men and women forced to confront existence in a time when living a meaningful life was (and remains) harder than ever before. Freedom, virtue, the sweet tranquility of an undivided soul, true happiness and genuine felicity so often seem so illusory to us moderns. Rousseau admits he derives his own happiness "solely in being useful to [us]" and that "his intense desire to see men happier, and especially worthy of being so" drove him to philosophize in the way he did (PSLB: δ11; LR: δ76).

If realizing the natural freedom available to a few geniuses, or the quiet moral freedom Rousseau advocates for the many, are, in the final analysis, modernity's highest excellences, perhaps an urgent political project of massive proportion does emerge—namely the defense of a fourth species of freedom: political freedom. Rousseau had insisted in his *Social Contract* that government has the dual charge of maintaining civil freedom and political freedom (SC: 3.1.5). Once it has become impossible to elevate the entire citizenry as Sparta did, however, perhaps the government's exclusive focus becomes maintaining the sort of "free state" into which Rousseau considers himself fortunate to have been born (SD: preface δ3). Rousseau provided all who would listen with a new political education. Europe and America have benefited from the philosopher's efforts for centuries now, and today, his philosophy is affecting an ever-larger proportion of the world's population.[40] But in order to preserve political freedom, great men like Rousseau and Tocqueville (and those who take their efforts seriously) will, no doubt, be required. In our democratic world, what is perhaps even more important than teaching men their rights, is that democrats finally learn that they have duties—both political and moral. No doubt, very few have the artistic ability and the theoretical understanding a task so monumental as this comprehensive *reeducation* surely demands;

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[40] Iran's popularly elected (reformist) head of state, President Khatami, studied Rousseau and Tocqueville extensively while at school in Paris. Nonetheless, the country remains, by all practical standards, a despotism ruled by a small group of Ayatollahs desperate to preserve their political influence in the face of a young and energetic population eager for reform (which is to

what this means, of course, is that great genius, genius well-cultivated, is more desperately required today than it has ever been. For the foreseeable future, it will be up to true philosophers and true artists to remind modern democrats what we have to fear from democracy and its characteristic excesses; what we must be still be taught, however, are "the means of rendering it profitable to men" (DA: p.13).

It has long been recognized that in democratic times, especially those in which the sciences and the arts flourish and where their development promotes the idle and luxurious lifestyles human beings so naturally long for, men and women will abuse their freedom, mistaking license for freedom and imaginary repose for genuine felicity. Thus, democratic polities and the men and women who make them up generally degenerate, and very quickly (cf. Rep: 563ea). Rousseau is right: men must be taught (persuaded, forced, whatever) to make *good* use of political liberty—for the sake of higher freedoms, genuine virtue. For a few, philosophy may well provide this. But for the many, new opinions that will turn men and women toward the quiet moral freedom Rousseau proposes—eventually toward true happiness—are essential to their living good lives. Thus it is that books like *Emile* and *Julie* will be necessary for a very long time. In the end, it may well be true that to the extent human goodness and human greatness remain possible today, the moral freedom and moral virtue available to the many will forever depend on the philosophic virtue and magnanimity of the few.

Conclusion

Only by coming to terms with the thesis Rousseau articulated so carefully and so impressively at the beginning of his career, can one begin to reconcile the apparent contradictions and paradoxes that beset Rousseau's writings.

The philosopher attacks the sciences and the arts while practicing both because achieving virtue and freedom makes different demands of very different kinds of men. He warns common men away from their practice because science and art do not benefit all those who are attracted to them, but only "a few great geniuses" (Grimm: δ19). For the many, their pursuit is damaging—both publicly and privately. As Rousseau

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say, driven almost exclusively by their corporate will). Not surprisingly, this has fuelled religious extremism and rather conservative interpretations of the Koran, and especially, of the Hadiths.

appreciates, those for whom science and art are actually beneficial "are few in number... for it takes a combination of great talents and great Virtues to put Science to good use" (Obs: δ15). Rousseau is, in the end, "prepared to grant" that "if anything can make up for ruined morals... the Sciences do more good than harm", but this is only true "provided the people do not pretend to be philosophers" (LR: δ25, δ30).

Rousseau's model for freedom and self-sufficiency is the *Second Discourse*'s solitary savage, while history's most extraordinary examples of small republics energized by unfailing public-spiritedness are his favorite communities: the Roman Republic was the "most virtuous people that ever was" and Sparta was a "republic of demi-gods rather than men, so superior did their virtues seem to human nature". This apparent contradiction is resolved by the recognition that Rousseau's "pure" state of nature ("which perhaps never existed"), is intended to depict man in his "embryonic" state. It is only in light of carefully refined and "purely intellectual" general ideas regarding man perfected—as can be "conceived only through discourse"—that philosophers can design educational curriculums devoted to helping humanity realize some approximation of that ideal. But, as Rousseau also demonstrates in the *Second Discourse*, men are by nature social. Thus, rearing men where the end is cultivating freedom and virtue—mankind's characteristic excellences—requires carefully constructed communities.

But sooner or later, living in common unleashes mankind's natural artfulness. Technological development is cumulative insofar as knowledge in the form of technical expertise is passed on from one generation to the next. Communities grow in size and complexity as the sciences and the arts multiply and become entrenched. As we have seen, however, their development has many consequences—a list that includes increased disparities in riches and the introduction of new luxuries, the erosion of public-spiritedness and the intensification of particular interests (which tends to the usurpation of the legislative authority), the transformation of international relations, the spread of Christianity and subsequently popular Enlightenment, etc.—all of which necessarily influences what sorts of ways and manners, opinions and *mores,* remain possible, and which become predominant, for a given time and place. Thus, man is revealed to have a history: his tastes, his pleasures, even his very form—all change over time.

That mankind has a history does not mean it must "progress" or change haphazardly, however. To be sure, taking men as they are today, it might well seem as though we have. Modernity truly is a difficult time in which to live (at least, from the perspective of human virtue and excellence). For "swept along in contrary routes by nature and by man, forced to divide ourselves between these different impulses, we follow a composite impulse which leads us to neither one goal nor the other. Thus, in conflict and floating during the whole course of our life, we end it without having been able to put ourselves in harmony with ourselves and without having been good either for ourselves or for others" (Emile: p.41). As Rousseau demonstrates, however, philosophical interrogation of man's historical nature—his perfectible nature—can guide his development by helping to establish a people's culture: in the modern world, through our art and our literature primarily. The *telos* or end of that development is the cultivation of "the most noble of man's faculties" and "the most precious of all his gifts"—namely, the realization of higher *human* freedoms. For it is only by knowing oneself, and living according to the law one prescribes for himself—difficult undertakings Rousseau helps all his readers to accomplish to the best of their natural abilities—that men and women can live their lives free of the many modern influences which threaten to leave us in perpetual contradiction with ourselves. As it turns out, these higher freedoms are the essential requisites for self-rule and ultimately an undivided soul. At the same time, it seems to be Rousseau's view that the tranquility of soul only an undivided individual can enjoy constitutes true happiness and genuine felicity.

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